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THE ARMY FROM WITHIN

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BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"An Absent-Minded War"

Caïrnes, William Watt

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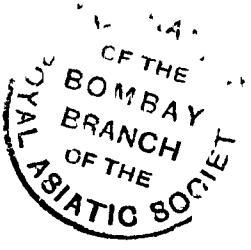

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PREFACE

THERE are one or two prefatory words with which I am anxious to waylay the reader about to glance through the following pages.

In the first place, I want to make it quite clear that, though it is exceedingly desirable to educate public opinion on the question of the needs of the Army, it is most necessary that those soldiers who administer the Army should be given both power and responsibility. The civil population must be educated to appreciate the nature of the reforms which are needed; to the soldiers must be left the executive work of carrying out these reforms in the most suitable manner. But care must be taken that a wise selection is made of the soldiers who are to be entrusted with the government of the Army. The Army has not been well governed in the past; we must prevent those officers who have, from ignorance or carelessness, misused their powers in the past from interference in the future. This can only be done if the nation is fully roused to the importance of action. At present I am very much afraid that the urgency of reform will be overlooked, and that other matters will come to the front which will distract public attention from the vital necessity of thorough and radical reform of the Army.

The questions of organisation and administration are both pressing and complex. A considerable amount of time will have to be spent, I fear, in the consideration of these subjects, and nothing can be done except with the consent of Parliament.

But there are an enormous number of reforms which can be carried out without delay, reforms which will affect recruiting, and, unless recruiting be stimulated, no voluntary army with daily increasing responsibilities can long fulfil its functions. In this little book I have consequently devoted myself to a consideration of those apparently trivial details, which in reality are of great importance, as they affect the comfort of the soldier, and also his military value to the country. The larger questions of organisation and administration I hope to discuss later in another volume.

I can only hope that I shall succeed in interesting my fellow-countrymen—and countrywomen—in the details of a soldier's life, and that they will in future pay more attention to the manner in which the troops on whom the country relies are prepared for their serious and dangerous duties in war.

LONDON, *7th December* 1900.

THE ARMY FROM WITHIN

CHAPTER I

ONE consequence of the recent war in South Africa has been to draw increased attention to our army. It is impossible to go anywhere, to mix in any society, to speak with one's fellow countrymen or countrywomen, of any rank in life or position in society, without being impressed by the fact that every one is proud of the feats performed by our soldiers in the war which has just ended, but that all are equally convinced that all is not as it should be in the army, and that there is a very real and pressing need for reform.

What shape that reform is to take, I have found to be generally considered a matter for the Government, assisted by Lords Roberts and Kitchener; the average civilian refuses to trust himself to more than to vague abuse of the War Office, accompanied by a vigorous expression of his opinion that it is high time that "something" was done. I find that there is, on the whole, a strong feeling among civilians that military matters are best dealt with by military men, a feeling which does not appear to be shared by the Government, and since the moment when the war with the Boers commenced, I have been struck with the very general diffidence with which intelligent and capable

men discussed the various questions dealing with the strategy of the generals on both sides, and the tactics employed by the contending forces.

Now, though I have no doubt that it is in a measure "good business" for soldiers to inculcate the doctrine that the art of war is nowadays a recondite science which can only be comprehended by those who have studied it from the days of their youth, "good business" because it renders soldiers less liable to strong criticism when they make mistakes, yet I feel that it is high time that someone made it clear to our civilian friends that there is nothing recondite whatever about modern military science, as indeed our friends the Boers have showed us, but that both strategy and tactics come well within the powers of comprehension of any man of moderate common sense. Provided, that is to say, that the man who is possessed of a robust common sense is also sufficiently instructed in the details of military organisation to be able to comprehend what operations are possible and what are impossible, a knowledge which no one is likely to possess who has not made some study of military history, or who is not acquainted with the manner in which soldiers are trained, armed, and equipped.

In this little book I hope to supply an outline sketch, as it were, of the organisation of the British army, and to supplement that by more detailed information on a matter on which a very strange ignorance prevails among the mass of our population, namely, the mode of life, training, pay, and prospects of both officers and men in that highly complex organisation, the British Army.

Those who do me the honour to read this book will, I trust, be better able to form an opinion as to the merits or demerits of the various schemes of army reform apart from re-organisation, which they may, from time to time, see discussed in their newspapers, and will also be able to see for themselves where the shoe now pinches in the case both of the private soldier and of his officer.

We must not, moreover, forget that we have to rely on voluntary enlistment to fill the ranks of our army, and that it is therefore very important that parents and guardians should be able to obtain reliable information as to the advantages of a soldier's career, information which I hope to be able to supply in the following pages. I have noticed that most people who are interested in the army, either because they are thinking of putting their sons into it, or because their sons have put themselves into it, or because they realise that, after all, the army is our last line of defence against invasion (with all due deference to the navy), are not fond of listening to or of reading long historical disquisitions in which the gradual evolution of our present land forces is traced through its various stages, but are chiefly concerned with the actual condition of things at the present moment. For this reason I shall mention neither Cromwell, Charles the Second, Queen Anne, Marlborough, nor Wellington, and shall confine my observations with regard to that great reformer, Mr Cardwell, to the remark that, if he had understood the British army better, his reforms, valuable as they were, would have been very much more real and more thorough. On

second thoughts, however, I find that a brief allusion to the reforms introduced by Mr Cardwell will make it easier for me to explain the existing system of organisation in our service. Shortly, Mr Cardwell found a long service army, officered by men who had, in the majority of cases, obtained their commissions by purchase, and changed it, not without encountering great opposition, into a short service army with a body of officers who obtained their commissions by their success in open competition. The commissioned ranks of the army ceased in fact, or rather perhaps I should say in theory, to be a close preserve for men of wealth and leisure, but were thrown open to every one, without distinction of creed or social position, who could win a place at the entrance examination. This was the theory, and I have no doubt that Mr Cardwell fully expected that by this time the army would be officered by men who made soldiering the business of their lives, who had few interests outside their profession, and who obtained their advancement from one position to another by merit and by merit alone. I am afraid his expectations have hardly been realised.

For this there are many reasons. In the first place, it is not possible for the poor man to place his son in the army without an outlay which he can hardly afford. He has to pay through the nose to a crammer to prepare his boy for the competitive examination, with the possibility that young hopeful may fail to take advantage of his opportunities, and that the time and money spent on his education may be completely thrown away; and he has, should his son succeed, to face the expense incurred in

maintaining him at Sandhurst, should he be bent on entering the cavalry or infantry of the line, an expense which will amount to £150 a year for fees alone, followed by the further outlay necessary to provide his son with an officer's outfit and to ensure him an allowance of from £60 a year upwards, during the whole course of his service. Should he, however, having heard somewhere that it is possible to get a commission from the ranks, countenance his son enlisting with that object in view, the result is not likely to be very satisfactory, as, even should the lad succeed in getting a commission, a matter about which it would not be well to be too confident, he will find himself without any great chances of getting on in the service, unless exceptionally favoured by good fortune, owing to the fact that he is hardly likely to obtain his commission till he is at least five-and-twenty years of age, when he will be many years older than the subalterns who stand immediately above him in the roll of seniority.

Of course the phenomenal success which has attended the military career of Major-General Hector Macdonald will doubtless have its effect in stimulating ambitious young men to go and do likewise, but they must not forget that Hector Macdonald is a very exceptional man, and was exceedingly fortunate in attracting the notice of so good a soldier, and so good a judge of a soldier, as Lord Roberts, at an early stage in his career. But if the brilliant success which has rewarded "Fighting Mac" cannot be counted upon by every young man who elects to enter the army through the ranks, he can always reckon on receiving advancement commensurate with his deserts, so long as

he follows a few simple rules, which I will not attempt to enumerate in categorical form, but which will, I hope, become intelligible to those who read this book with attention.

In commencing a book with the scope of this work there are always certain initial difficulties to be overcome. In the first place, it is not easy to decide straight off exactly where one ought to begin, nor having begun, to what extent exact details should be given, in view of the very well-known fact that most readers are inclined to skip anything like figures, preferring more general statements as less fatiguing to the attention. However, I hope I shall be able to steer my way without misadventure between the shoals of statistics on the one hand, and the quicksands of vague generalities on the other.

CHAPTER II

STARTING then at the bottom of the tree, we will follow the career of a young man who elects to enter the army through the ranks, in which he will meet with no difficulty provided he is able to satisfy the doctor as to his physical fitness for the profession of his choice, and to come up to the minimum standard of height and chest measurement in force at the time. This standard varies from time to time according to the state of the recruiting market. If there is a tightness in the market, as I am sorry to say is very frequently the case owing to the large number of men required and the limited number of applicants, he will find that he can enter the infantry though only 5 feet 3 inches high, and 33 inches round the chest, while half an inch less in height will still not make him too short for the Army Service Corps or the Royal Army Medical Corps, both services in which there are plenty of good "billets" going for intelligent and well-conducted young men. If the recruit hankers after the splendid uniform of the Household Cavalry, he must be at least 5 feet 11 inches in height, and not less than 36 inches in chest measurement, while 34 inches round the chest and a few inches less in height will qualify him for

admission to the corps of Lancers, Hussars, or Dragoons.

However, as the standard measurements for the different corps vary considerably from time to time according to circumstances, the intending recruit will do well to present himself at the nearest recruiting office, where he will be given the information which he wants, and will also be told if the regiment which he wishes to join is open to receive recruits at the place at which he desires to present himself for attestation. When a corps is able to get plenty of recruits in its own territorial district, in the case of the infantry, it is not usually possible for a man to enlist for it except in the regimental district; but where the local supply falls off, regiments are usually opened for enlistment throughout the country, though a preference is usually given, as far as possible, to men belonging to the county with which the regiment is connected.

But even in cases where the would-be soldier is of such tender years, that is to say, where he is only on the verge of eighteen, and is of such poor physique that he is unable to either stretch himself in length or swell himself out in girth to meet the requirements of the doctors, his case is not by any means hopeless, for if he can persuade the doctor that he only needs food and exercise to enable him to grow, he may be enlisted as a "special," in which case he will find that his gradual increase in height and chest measurement will be frequently measured and will be followed with as much interest by the depot staff as if he were being fattened for exhibition at the local cattle show.

What is more, he will receive pay at the same rate as more bulky and powerful recruits, and will be able to reckon his service for transfer to the reserve from the date of his attestation, instead of from the date when he was first able to fill the jacket of a properly developed soldier. I cannot help thinking that this is good for the half-starved recruit, but bad for the country, and I hope that we shall shortly see that a regulation is put into force to forbid these "specials" from being counted as effective soldiers till they have grown into animals of the required development. During this growing stage, also, I would, while increasing their food, reduce their pay, and I would, if possible, place some restrictions on their visits to the canteen, where the recruit is not likely to do himself any good, but where it is exceedingly probable that he may not only fall into bad company, but that he may acquire drinking habits which will inevitably have a disastrous effect upon his after career in the army. If I had to give a recruit one piece of advice, and only one, I would say to him, "Try and avoid the canteen as long as possible."

I have lately read statistics intended to prove that the drinking habits which once were so marked a characteristic of the British soldier are now a thing of the past. I don't want to slander Tommy Atkins, for whom I have a most unbounded admiration, but all I can say is, that if it is seriously intended to argue that drunkenness is a thing now unknown in the army, all I can reply is "Rats," which may be vulgar, but is certainly expressive. Who that is

familiar with life in the barrack-room does not remember the bacchanalian rites which marked every "pay-night," and which culminated in a regular orgy on Christmas Day, on which sacred festival drunkenness is openly winked at by the authorities.

But the figures are there, and we all know that figures cannot lie. From these figures one can read that drunkenness has certainly diminished in the army, as there are not nearly so many men punished for drunkenness now as there were say ten or fifteen years ago. Alas! this does not prove that drunkenness is less; it only proves that discipline has been so much relaxed of late that it is unusual for a drunken soldier to be placed in confinement so long as he goes to bed quietly and refrains from giving trouble.

Of late years there has been a very decided slackening of the bonds of discipline, a slackening which was deliberately connived at by the authorities in order to make the life of a soldier easier for respectably brought up young men, who might, it was feared, be frightened away from a military career by the dread of the severe punishments with which military crime, including drunkenness, was punished by the authorities. So eager, moreover, were the ruling powers to prove that crime of various kinds in the army was diminishing, that inspecting officers had no hesitation in wigging commanding officers of regiments or battalions if their guard reports contained the names of many prisoners, or if many courts-martial had taken place during the year in the unit under inspection. Commanding officers are, I believe, only mortal, at any rate they have

as strong an objection to being wigged as any of us, and consequently they have usually determined that if the general didn't like to see court-martial entries it would be good policy to oblige him, and that the guard reports could very speedily be made to show a reduced number of entries by the simple expedient of reducing the scale of punishments till officers in command of companies, in very despair, would forbear from sending their prisoners into the orderly room to be told off, but would prefer to deal with them themselves, frequently having recourse to ingenious but illegal punishments in order to get square with the offenders.

It will at once appear, what does not seem to have struck the simple-minded authorities, that the only people who benefited by the leniency thus shown to offenders were the offenders themselves, who had, and have, a good time of it, and who consequently were, and are, a continual source of annoyance to the well-conducted soldiers who are only anxious to do their duty and to get on in the service. I hope that the necessity for doing something to tighten up the bonds of discipline will not escape the notice of the reformers. Make the life of the bad hat, of the persistent evil-doer, a burden and a weariness to him, and the lot of the steady recruit will be greatly improved in comfort, and a fertile source of corruption will be removed from the barrack-room.

But anxious as I am to see discipline made more severe in many respects, and drunkenness especially punished with greater severity, for drink unnerves a man and renders him speedily unfit for military

duty, I would at the same time relax many of the regulations which now are only effectual in galling the well-conducted soldier, and in placing him at a disadvantage when compared with his comrade in civil life. I would do away with the numerous roll-calls which now make a soldier's life a burden to him in barracks. I would abolish tattoo roll-call, reveillé roll-call, breakfast roll-call, and dinner roll-call, except, be it always understood, for those defaulters who have shown that they are unfit to be trusted with the liberty which ought to be the birth-right of every self-respecting man. Probably it would be as well to make all recruits be in barracks by ten o'clock—half-past nine is altogether too early—but so soon as a young soldier had finished his recruit's drill, I would allow him to go in and out of barracks as he liked, so long as he kept himself, his arms, and his equipment, always clean and fit for service, and so long as he was never an instant late for a parade or for any duty.

I don't believe that we would ever have cause to regret the innovation. I believe that Tommy would greatly appreciate, but would not abuse, the additional liberty, and I am convinced that it could not but have an excellent effect upon recruiting.

But I would punish the drunkard and the loafer, the dirty man and the "skrimshanker" with much greater severity than at present, all of which would tend to the comfort of the good man and the discomfort of the bad man, who would soon be so grievously discouraged that he would cease to regard the army as a possible career at all, which is the point at which all reformers ought to aim.

Again, as to the records which are kept of the offences committed by every soldier, records which are permanently entered upon a fatal document called a defaulter sheet, I would keep no defaulter sheets for recruits at all. Not till a man had a year's service, had cut his eye teeth, and had learnt what he might do, and what would assuredly end in trouble and in his undoing, would I register any crime irrevocably against any soldier. We have all seen cases in our own experience where the record of some serious military offence, such as striking a corporal or using insubordinate language to a superior, has stood in damning evidence against a soldier during his whole career, frequently, after twenty years of excellent service, proving an effective bar to the grant of the good conduct medal. This is all wrong, and the fact that every entry is irrevocable, has done much, I am convinced, to make young soldiers careless and finally desperate, adding another to the always swelling number of soldiers broken, not in our wars, but in our prisons, a total which we must all do our utmost to diminish.

But I am keeping our recruit shivering outside the orderly room. It is high time we got him another step along the road towards the baton of the major-general, if not the field-marshal.

CHAPTER III

WHILE the recruit has been kicking his heels awaiting attestation, the term by which is meant his final enrolment as a soldier of the Queen, he has probably made up his mind whether he will enlist for seven years with the colours and five in the reserve, or whether he would prefer the shorter period of three years with the colours and nine years in the first class of the reserve. The large majority select the first alternative, the reason for which is not quite clear, as men enlisting for the shorter period have always the option of subsequently varying the period for which they have enlisted, should they wish to do so. As a matter of fact, only a limited percentage of three years' men can be received in the army, owing to the necessity of providing drafts for the foreign battalions, but I am under the impression that the full number of three years' recruits in the infantry of the line has never been reached since the system was given a trial. Should the seven years' colour service of the soldier expire while he is serving abroad, he may be kept an additional twelve months with the colours and should he have been recalled to serve, in case of war, or should he have been permitted to put in the whole of his twelve years with the colours, he may, in case of war or if serving beyond the seas, be retained

till he has served thirteen years in all. Then he is free, free for ever from the bonds and restraints of discipline, free to go where he likes, to do what he likes, within the limits of the laws, and knows no longer any master. Such, however, are the attractions of army service, so strong is the hold which the barracks fasten upon the heart of a man, that the large majority of soldiers have hardly shaken the dust of the parade ground from their feet ere they pine for the sound of the bugles and long to be back once more in the regiment which for twelve long years has been their home.

Under the existing system of army organisation in force in this country we retain no hold upon these twelve years' men, who, trained soldiers as they are, are permitted to vanish from the army, leaving no trace behind. To this there are certain exceptions, as men used to horses, who have served in the mounted infantry or as gunners or drivers in the artillery, and, by a recent order, other well-conducted men, are permitted to enroll themselves for service in Section D of the army reserve in which they may serve for four years, thus completing sixteen years' service in all.

The recruit, now we will suppose attested for seven years with the colours and five in the reserve, will, after being finally approved, be sent to the depot of his corps, where he will be "posted" to a company, clothed in the Queen's uniform, and supplied with a "free kit" which he must keep up at his own expense. In the infantry of the line this kit will consist of the following articles: three sets of collar badges, one cap badge, one kit bag, one tin of blacking, one oil bottle, issued with the rifle,

one pair of braces, one blacking brush, one brass brush, one cloth brush, one polishing brush, one shaving brush, one button brass, one comb, one mess-tin cover, one mess tin, one knife, one fork, one spoon, one hold-all (a small canvas wrapper to hold a knife, fork, spoon, etc.), one jersey, two pairs of mitts (for winter wear), one razor and case, two flannel shirts, one piece of soap, three pairs of worsted socks, one pipeclay sponge, two towels, and one housewife.

Now there are several points about this free kit which ought to be looked into without delay. In the first place, I think that it is hardly fair to expect a man to keep up the whole of this kit during the seven years of his service. He ought to be periodically supplied with new articles. Of course it is absurd to say, as I have heard it said, that the authorities expect a soldier to make these articles last him for the period of his colour service. They don't expect anything of the sort, which ought to be clear enough to any one who takes the trouble to read down the list I have given. How could any one expect a piece of soap, for instance, and not a particularly large one, to last any man for seven years? Of course no one imagines anything of the kind.

The theory of the authorities is that in issuing out these articles to the recruit they are treating him with uncommon liberality. Needless to say the recruit takes an entirely different view of the matter, and, having been told that he will receive a free kit, naturally, after the fashion of mankind, begins to think that he will get something more. He very soon begins to make the discovery that, owing to his carelessness and ignorance,

he is continually losing small articles of his kit, deficiencies which are duly noted every Saturday, with the result that he is continually under stoppages for the loss of kit, and begins in consequence to feel that he is aggrieved and is being unfairly treated by the authorities. By the time that he acquires sufficient worldly knowledge to be able to keep his kit complete, the effects of wear and tear are beginning to make themselves felt, which means more stoppages, so that it is not too much to say that for the first few months of his service the recruit only receives a small proportion of the pay to which he has begun to look forward as a right.

Now it is notorious that by far the largest number of desertions occur in the case of young soldiers with less that one year's service, and as discontent with one's surroundings or with the conditions under which one has to work and to live is one of the most potent factors in causing desertion, we shall act wisely if we remove, even at considerable expense, one of the exciting causes of discontent in young soldiers. But the expense will not be at all considerable; certainly not enough to warrant us in refusing to make the concession for which I ask. At the outside I do not believe it would cost the public £50,000 a year to keep up the articles of kit which I have enumerated above, always, of course, requiring each article to be kept in a serviceable condition for a certain time.

If a recruit lost his kit through carelessness, it would, of course, be necessary to make him pay for replacing the missing articles, but it would, I think, be found that if the free kit were kept up at the public expense the number of articles carelessly lost would

show a considerable diminution. This sounds paradoxical, I am aware, but it is not as paradoxical as it sounds, and for this reason. The articles, which are lost by carelessness are very frequently, I fear, "commandeered" by one of those petty pilferers who are the curse of the barrack-room, who, finding that he has worn out, broken, or lost some article of his own, replaces the thing which he has lost from the kit of the nearest recruit. Now if the pilferer knew that any article which had been worn out would be replaced free of cost to himself, one of the chief inducements to steal from his comrade would be at once removed, which would be a decided gain not only to the pilferer himself but also to the "pilferee," if I may coin a word for the occasion.

I have said that I estimate the cost to the country of keeping up the free kits at about £50,000 a year, but we must remember that if I am right in believing that the fact of being continually under stoppages for loss of kit has anything to do with the so frequent desertion of young soldiers, this £50,000 will be more than recouped to us by a diminution in the waste of the army, a waste which has of late attained appalling dimensions. However, there is another alternative to the plan which I have just proposed to which we shall come in due course, when we discuss the subject of clothing.

Apart, however, from the system on which the free kit is issued, it is well worth while considering for a moment the articles of which it is composed, with a view to seeing if we might not make one or two additions to the articles above enumerated in order to add something to the comfort of the soldier.

Now I am at a loss to discover a reason why recruits joining the Household Cavalry, the cavalry of the line, the Royal Artillery, the Royal Engineers, or the Army Service Corps should be supplied with a hair brush, an article which is denied to all infantry, even to the soldiers of the Foot Guards. Why should the infantry soldier not brush his hair? He is given a comb, why not a brush? This is one of those inscrutable problems which I would give a good deal to be able to solve, but for which I can find absolutely no possible solution at all. I can see no reason why Tommy of the line should not have his hair brush, when Tommy of the hussars is provided with one, free of charge, by Government. I hope this little matter may be seen to. Again, why are the recruits of the favoured corps I have just mentioned given two pairs of cotton drawers apiece on enlistment, while the unfortunate recruit who joined the infantry gets none. It is not that only mounted men are given these certainly necessary articles of clothing; on the contrary, dismounted men of both the artillery and engineers are given them, only the dismounted men of the Army Service Corps, who get a hair brush though, have to go without. Now these articles of underwear are most necessary, if only for the sake of cleanliness, especially to men who have to take a great deal of violent outdoor exercise. Most men, in fact, buy them for themselves, but of course they feel aggrieved in being compelled to do so when men of other corps get them supplied free of charge. Let all Tommies, then, be given a hair brush, and two pairs of cotton drawers without delay.

I should also like to know why men in the favoured corps already mentioned should be given three flannel shirts apiece, while the infantry man only gets two. This is peculiarly absurd, because the infantry soldier is continually required to drill in his shirt sleeves in the summer months, an ordeal to which the proud possessors of three shirts are never exposed. It is a curious anomaly, a legitimate grievance of the infantry soldier, and ought to be remedied as quickly as may be possible. I notice that civilian pupil teachers who are employed at the Duke of York's School and at the Royal Hibernian Military School, and who receive free kits in the same manner as soldiers, are supplied with new articles gratis, on the old ones being worn out by fair wear and tear. Why cannot this plan be followed in the case of Tommy Atkins?

At the same time as the recruit gets his free kit, he is given his clothing, consisting, in the infantry of the line, of two pair of dark blue trousers, a cloth tunic, a blue and a scarlet kersey frock, a field service cap, a full head-dress, two pairs of ankle-boots, a pair of canvas shoes, a greatcoat and cape, and a pair of leather leggings. All these articles will be new, with the exception of the head-dress, the greatcoat and cape, and the leggings, which, being termed for some extraordinary reason, "public clothing," as distinguished from "personal clothing," as the other articles are termed, may be issued part worn.

During his service the soldier will receive annually one pair of trousers, and every second year an additional pair, one kersey frock, one field service cap, one shoulder pad every second year—to preserve his coat

from the wear of the rifle—and every half year he will be entitled to one pair of boots. His tunic, which he only wears on ceremonial parades and when walking out on Sundays, has to last him two years. As for the public clothing, the articles of which it is composed have to last for a specified time, for instance, the greatcoat has to last five years, the cape ten, and the leggings and the haversack, which I forgot to mention before, three each.

If these articles were what is known as "part-worn" when issued to the soldier, he has only to wear them for the unexpired period of their official life, then, if out of date, they have to be brought before a board of officers who will condemn them, after which the quartermaster will be able to issue fresh articles to take their place. In order, however, to encourage men to be thrifty and to take care of their garments, if a soldier can produce serviceable articles in good condition when the time comes round for him to draw new clothing, his captain may allow him to draw their cash value instead, but this will be of no immediate advantage to the soldier, as the cash is simply placed to the credit of what is known as his clothing account, where it remains till another year has elapsed. The object of this regulation is to enable clothing to be subsequently purchased to make good damaged articles, without running the man into debt.

This is a very praiseworthy object, and I would have nothing to say against the regulation if we were legislating for school-boys, but I think that "grandmotherly" legislation of this sort is entirely out of place when we are devising regulations

to govern our treatment of our troops, as it only serves to encourage men to be careless and unthrifty, instead of teaching them, as we should endeavour to do, to be self-reliant and prudent in the management of their own affairs. How often do we hear officers complain that soldiers are like so many children, entirely unable to shift for themselves in the smallest emergency; if this is the case, it is owing entirely to the manner in which the soldier's every action is hedged in by rules and regulations from the day he joins the army till the day he takes his discharge, and goes out into the world to acquire his first lesson, usually an expensive one, in the management of his own affairs, without the paternal guidance of his commanding officer, his captain, and his colour-sergeant.

What I should like to see, though I know I shall be regarded as entirely heretical for what I am going to say, is the pay of every man increased by the annual value of the clothing with which it is considered necessary to supply him. Once supplied with his outfit, I would give the man no clothes, but would give him an allowance, and an adequate allowance, in lieu, compelling him to keep himself clean and neat at his own expense. If he failed to do so, nothing would be easier than to supply him with the required clothing, stopping his pay till the cost had been made good. If this were done, the soldier would be encouraged in habits of thrift and carefulness very much more than he is at present, and the result could not fail to be satisfactory.

But if the present system is to be continued, there are some absurd anomalies in it which ought to be put

right at once. In the first place, the allowance of clothing is not nearly enough, considering the rough work which the soldier is annually required to perform on manœuvres and at field training. Moreover, this point affects not only the pocket of the soldier, but his military efficiency, and hence his value to the country, as I shall proceed to demonstrate.

Every year the soldier, in addition to being taken out on manœuvres, an experience which he may escape occasionally, has to go through what is known as a course of "field training" under his captain. In this course he is supposed to be instructed in the whole art of war, from a private soldier's point of view, the time at his captain's disposal being twenty-one working days, which is, of course, absurdly inadequate. It is rendered still more inadequate by the fact that, owing to the natural desire of officers to avoid running their men in for a heavy charge upon their limited purses, a great deal of the most necessary work, such as instruction in the art of skirmishing and taking advantage of cover, is left to the imagination instead of being assiduously practised.

The captain can see that if he makes his men grovel on the ground to conceal themselves, as they would have to grovel in time of war, they will at once ruin the whole of their clothing, consequently grovelling becomes a lost art in our service, and when we blunder on top of the Boers, or any other enemy who can shoot, we find that we have little or no knowledge how to use inequalities of ground to the best advantage. We fail, in short, to teach our men one of the most important of the actions they will have to practise in war, namely, the art of

taking cover, simply because we know it will wear out the men's clothes. Of course the natural result is that on ninety-nine out of every hundred parades the soldier preserves a rigidly erect attitude, while on the hundredth a certain concession to realism may be made by requiring the front rank to kneel while firing volleys, an evolution which the soldier performs with much deliberation, being careful to select a spot which will not soil the knees of his trousers. Of course this is ridiculous. On manœuvres men have to lie on the ground, as they may occasionally have to do when practising the "attack" on the drill field attached to the barracks, but the soldier will never be asked to lie down if the grass is damp, or if the ground is dirty—except on manœuvres when he will have to take his chance—for fear of spoiling his clothes.

I imagine that we are on the way to a reform in matters of uniform, a reform which will consist in making the swagger dress of the soldier more attractive than it is at present, which ought not to be beyond the powers even of a War Office Departmental Committee, while providing him with a stout working dress of a material selected for its hard wearing qualities and for the partial invisibility which it conveys upon its wearer. However, whatever reforms are in store, let us hope that the soldier will be liberally treated in the matter of clothing. If the clothing is to be kept up by Government, see that he is given a good allowance; if the soldier is required to keep it up himself, which for many reasons would be preferable, we must insist upon his being given an income amply sufficient to allow him to do so without trenching upon the shilling a day which he now receives.

Boots form part of a soldier's clothing. In the matter of boots he is not treated with anything like sufficient liberality. A soldier is always required to have two good pairs of boots in a serviceable condition, a feat which was perhaps possible in the old days when a soldier's work was confined to half a dozen short drill parades in the week, and when route-marching and manœuvres, not to mention field training, were undreamt of. But since then the work has trebled, but the allowance of shoe leather remains the same.

The authorities will answer this complaint by saying that they give men compensation for clothing, including boots, worn out on manœuvres. It is quite true that this is done; after the Salisbury Plain manœuvres, when what between flinty roads and heavy dust the men ruined both their boots and clothes, some 4s. 6d. per head was given as compensation, thus almost adding insult to injury. Unless the authorities were prepared to give compensation on a reasonable scale, it would have been much wiser for them to deny their liability to give any compensation at all. Their attitude then would, at any rate, have been intelligible; but to admit their liability and then to offer the men an absurdly inadequate sum was an act of folly, which served no purpose except to encourage grumbling.

I am afraid I have rather let my tongue run away with me on the subject of clothing, on which there are still many points which I have left untouched but will refer to later, but I hope that my civilian readers are now better informed as to the system on which our soldiers are clothed.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN the recruit has drawn his clothing and received his kit, we may imagine, without unduly stretching our powers of imagination, that he is beginning to suffer from the pangs of hunger. He will want his dinner.

It may interest us to see what is provided for him. A soldier's food is divided into rations and groceries; the rations are given him by Government, but the groceries he provides for himself, the Government now giving each man an allowance of 3d. a day to aid him in doing so, once he has reached the age of 19 years. So long as he is a recruit he has to pay the grocery stoppage out of his pay, which is, I think, quite right and proper, and is indeed a principle which might well be carried a step further. In barracks a soldier is given ¾ lb. of meat, weighed with bone, and 1 lb. of bread per day, an allowance which compares unfavourably with the rations of a naval blue-jacket, which Jack is now agitating to get increased. It is usual for the men in a barrack-room to mess together, in which case the rations for all the men in mess are drawn in one lot, and cooked in one dish, being either baked or steamed according to the *menu* of the day. I don't think that any one can

fairly say nowadays that Tommy's dinner is, as a rule, badly cooked; but I think most people who saw the dinner and the hungry men about to devour it would agree that there might with advantage be a good deal more of it.

When on manœuvres, or living under canvas, the ration is increased to 1 lb. of meat per man; I think that it would be an excellent thing if the allowance in barracks could be raised to the same figure. Where proper arrangements are made for keeping the bread of the mess, a matter which will usually rest a good deal with the company officers —for the men will never take any trouble about a matter of this kind unless obliged to — the allowance of bread ought to be sufficient, though where waste is permitted, and the tea-bread is left lying on an exposed shelf in a barrack-room full of men pipe-claying their straps, it will usually be necessary to buy tea-bread out of the grocery book.

But I must endeavour to tell you what the grocery book is. It contains a record of the expenditure of the company on groceries, including vegetables, tea-bread, tea, coffee, etc., and the accounts of the men with the dry canteen, where all these articles are purchased. To the credit of the grocery account is placed the grocery stoppages of the men, namely, 3d. per day per man in mess, and it is also swelled by money obtained from the sale of dripping and other kitchen refuse, and by a grant given every month or quarter as a percentage on the sum expended by the company in the dry canteen. The book is managed by a corporal, under the supervision of the colour-sergeant

and captain, the latter being really responsible that the money available is properly expended to the best advantage.

The soldier's *menu* is generally somewhat as follows. For breakfast, served at eight o'clock, he will receive bread and tea, to which may be added butter or bacon, or a fried egg or sausage or some similar delicacy, according to the time of year and the prices of the various articles. For dinner, served at one punctually, he will be given baked or stewed meat with potatoes and possibly onions, and if the grocery book will run to it, he may have a "duff" as well. He will be allowed to drink nothing, unless he takes the trouble to bring in some water in the bowl in which he has drunk his breakfast tea. Now this is a matter on which I feel very much inclined to make myself a nuisance to my readers. Why, in the name of common sense, that rare commodity in the arrangement of things military, should the soldier not be allowed to drink a pint of beer with his dinner? On grounds of health alone I believe it is supposed to be more advisable to drink at one's meals than between meals, but the soldier is the only one of Her Majesty's subjects out of gaol who is by regulation forbidden to drink his glass of beer with his dinner.

What the cause of this absurd and mischievous regulation may be I cannot conceive. It is incredible that it could have been framed with any intention of keeping the men sober, for I imagine that it would have, if anything, the very contrary effect. Rather is it more likely to suppose that it was introduced in order to benefit the trade of the canteen, for the

soldier who goes to that institution either before or after his dinner to get his pint is exceedingly likely to have just one pot more, and possibly one or two more after that. In fact this regulation, in my opinion, makes strongly for intemperance in the army, and I am firmly convinced that numbers of men would never get into the habit of frequenting the canteen if they were allowed to drink their pint at their dinner.

Our new commander-in-chief, Lord Roberts, has worked hard throughout his career in the cause of temperance in the army; I earnestly hope that he will lose no time in rescinding this mischievous regulation, but will at once issue orders that a pint of beer per man may be drawn from the canteen by the orderlies of messes to be consumed in the barrack-room at dinner. Where men are teetotallers, and I am glad to say that there are already a number of total abstainers in the army, and that, thanks greatly to Lord Roberts, this number is gradually increasing, of course mineral waters or some other non-alcoholic drink could be drawn instead; but why, oh why, cannot some one invent a temperance drink which does not make one repent one's virtue every time one drinks it?

As to the manner in which the soldier's meals are served, I do not think that it ought to be either difficult or costly to devise some improvement. Lads who have been decently brought up, the class of recruits we want to encourage in the army, must find it no easy matter to accustom themselves to the manners and customs of the barrack-room at meal times. The table consists of a deal top on iron

legs, from which it is lifted after every meal to be scrubbed by the soldiers who have used it. Consequently it is usually fairly clean (though every table has its "show" side), which is a good thing in its way, as it is very often used for placing potatoes and such like articles upon without the intervention of a dish. The meat is brought in from the cook house in the iron dish in which it has been cooked, and is hacked roughly into equal portions by the man who is acting as "orderly man" for the day. Each soldier receives his portion upon his plate, and the whole fall to without any further ceremony.

The meal is usually more or less uncomfortable and hurried, though there is no reason for haste, and within ten minutes of the food being placed on the table it has usually been disposed of, and the men are unshipping the table top preparatory to taking it outside and scrubbing it. I do not for a moment desire to see an elegant dinner equipage provided for Tommy Atkins, who would neither desire nor appreciate such a departure from his usual habits, but I must confess that I can see no reason why a tablecloth should not be provided, nor why some attempt could not be made to give some appearance of comfort and some little refinement to the men's dining-room.

As barracks are planned, it is necessary in most cases for the men to have their meals in the rooms in which they live; this is unfortunate, but even so, something might easily be done to make the barrack-rooms a little more home-like, and to enable the soldier to have his meals in greater comfort. For one thing, I can see no reason why chairs should not

be substituted for forms in the barrack-rooms, which I would also like to see provided with a plain but serviceable bookcase, and a more liberal provision of cupboards. Better arrangements might also be easily made for the lighting of these rooms, which are now only dimly lighted by one or two gas jets, pendant from the ceiling, and fitted with burners of the Government pattern, which are admirably calculated to provide the least possible light with the maximum expenditure of gas. We are bidden to wait till the electric light is installed in all barracks. I don't know whether I am of a peculiarly impatient temperament, but that seems rather a long time to wait, so far as I am concerned, and I would like to see some system of incandescent gas burner tried meanwhile.

However, to return to the meal question: for tea, usually served at any hour between four and five o'clock, the soldier receives a bowl of tea, not of the very highest quality, but still undeniable tea, and so much of his bread ration as remains, possibly supplemented by some tea-bread purchased through the grocery book. If the funds of the mess are in a flourishing condition, he may also receive some relish in the form of butter or brawn, or something to add a little variety to the *menu*, but the tea meal is not a strong point of the barrack fare. After tea, the soldier gets nothing till breakfast time next day, unless he likes to go to the regimental coffee-shop where he can usually get soup, or fried fish and potatoes, or a sausage, or something of the sort, very fairly cooked at a very low price. Such is the daily average bill of fare of Tommy Atkins.

Now, I have one most revolutionary suggestion to make about the soldier's meals, which is that the dinner hour should be changed from one o'clock to some hour in the evening, say seven, for instance. I am quite aware that there are many objections to be urged to such a change, among which the more important are that it would be an unheard-of thing to do, that the class of people who provide the majority of our recruits always dine in the middle of the day, and have done so since time immemorial, and that it would be a nuisance if special arrangements had to be made for feeding officers' servants and other men whose special duties would prevent their being in the barrack-room at that hour.

Against these objections I would urge that the soldier is frequently required to work after one o'clock in the day, and will in future be required to do more work in the afternoon than he has done in the past, and that it is difficult to do any useful and instructive work when the men are inclined to be lethargic after the principal meal of the day. On manœuvres, or when the troops are being exercised in field operations of any sort, the present dinner-hour comes at the most inconvenient time. The officer in command dislikes keeping the men out too long, because he feels that if he does their dinners will probably be spoilt, apart from the fact that they will become unpleasantly hungry, and disinclined to take any interest in the exercise which is going on, though it is true that on special occasions men are furnished with a chunk of bread and cheese to stay their appetites till they return to barracks.

But how much better it would be if the men were

in the habit of taking their principal meal at seven in the evening, or six, should some think seven too late, having a lunch of bread and cheese provided for them in the middle of the day. At first I am afraid the men would sorely miss their mid-day meal, but the hours at which one feeds are, after all, chiefly a matter of habit, and I have no doubt that the men would soon get accustomed to their late dinners, which would have the good effect of keeping men in barracks, and rendering them disinclined to wander out to run the gauntlet of the attractions offered by public houses and other possibly less elevating resorts. I think that the late dinner would work entirely for good; but I am not bigoted on this point, and am quite prepared to hear that there are other objections to my suggestion besides those to which I have referred. At any rate, I think the plan would be worth a trial.

So much for the soldier's meals; now let us look into the question of his bed and lavatory accommodation. The barrack bedstead now in general use is a strong but rather ricketty structure of iron, made in two portions, the lower half sliding in the daytime underneath the part on which the soldier's head and shoulders rest when it is used for its legitimate purpose. His bedding consists of a mattress of white ticking filled with either straw or coir, his bolster—he has no pillow—being of the same material and similarly stuffed. He is provided with a pair of coarse sheets and two blankets of the well-known brown army pattern. I am afraid very many men never sleep in their sheets, which cavalry soldiers frequently find useful as horse rubbers, and I also regret to say

that Tommy does not use either the old-fashioned night-shirt or the more modern pyjamas, but sleeps in the same flannel shirt in which he has borne the burden and heat of the day. I don't seek to defend this for a moment. I have never yet met any one who does. No one is particularly anxious to "coddle" the private soldier, at least if there are such people I don't think they have much influence at the War Office, but, though Tommy is certainly required to rough it on active service and on manœuvres, yet after all there is such a thing as cleanliness, and I think we might do a little more in the army than content ourselves with merely trying to obtain the outward semblance of that virtue without paying very much regard to the man inside the scarlet coat and pipe-clayed belt. The issue of pyjamas made of flannelette or some similar material would not involve great expense, and would certainly add a great deal to Tommy's comfort.

Again, in all our barracks the washing accommodation is altogether insufficient. To every block is attached a "wash-house," in which you will find a long slab of slate with a dozen or so of small zinc basins on it, each basin underneath a tap for cold water. There is no hot water. At the end of the wash-house you may see a door; if you peep through this door you will see, in a place resembling in most of its features the average family vault, a dark object of slate, more like a stone coffin than anything else, the real purpose of which is proclaimed to be a bath by the small tap which you can see through the gloom to overhang one end. A more depressing chamber than the average barrack bath-room it would be

difficult to find. Should any man of melancholy bent find his way there by accident, I am convinced that he would inevitably commit suicide. Cleanliness must indeed be more than a passion, it must be a religion, to induce a man to voluntarily enter so awe-inspiring a mausoleum. Yet we expect our soldiers to be clean! Even if every man in a regiment, in a moment of bravado, desired to take a bath on the same day, the bath accommodation in barracks would not allow of their doing so, even were all parades suspended for the purpose. There are not many barracks in which you could find more than half a dozen baths, each of which can only be very slowly filled by one small tap; how could eight hundred men bathe in them at a greater rate than about one bath per man per month? But I don't believe that any man ever uses these horrible-looking baths. I never heard of such a thing, and I am sure that if any one did it would start the whole barracks a-talking.

Why cannot the Government make up their minds to provide each barrack with really good lavatory accommodation? Soldiers as a rule have no preference for dirt, and would greatly enjoy the chance of being allowed to use a cheerful bath-room, supplied—between certain hours only, if necessary—with hot water as well as cold. Both the health and self-respect of the men would inevitably be increased. There is more truth in the old saying that "cleanliness is next to godliness" than many of us are aware.

But to return to the barrack-room. When the soldier gets up in the morning, he has to "make up" his bed; that is to say, he rolls the mattress tightly

in a cylindrical form round his bolster, securing the roll firmly with his bed strap, a stout leather strap about eight feet long, first placing at the top his blankets and sheets, which must be neatly folded with the blankets outside. He then lays his cleanest towel over the top to give a finish to the edifice, and hangs his bed card—a ticket bearing his name and number—by the hook attached to it, to a hole in the bed strap. I forgot to mention that one blanket is left out of the roll; this is neatly folded, and when the lower portion of the bed is pushed in, as already described, the folded blanket softens the asperities of the bedcot to the limbs of its owner, who uses it during the daytime as a chair. Under the cot is the small barrack box, a comparatively recent concession to the soldier, in which he stores any little valuables he may have, and over it is a shelf on which his clothes must be neatly folded. Beneath the shelf is a series of pegs on which the straps of his equipment have to be arranged, according to the fashion in favour for the time being in his regiment. Now that I have described, to the best of my ability, the intimate details of a soldier's toilet, the finish to which, including the arrangement of the "quiff" or forelock, has to be given at that little looking-glass hanging on a nail by the window, I will defer a further description of his daily life till another chapter.

CHAPTER V

ONE of the unfortunate results of the Boer war has been to throw discredit upon drill. We have been informed by an eminent novelist who accompanied a civilian field hospital during a considerable portion of the campaign, and who is undoubtedly a man of great power of observation, and of much originality of mind, that the defence of this country can quite safely be entrusted to the citizens of these islands, provided that they acquire a certain amount of skill with the rifle, owing to the fact that the numerous hedgerows, and the generally intersected nature of the country, will hamper the movements of the trained soldiers of an invader. Apparently the same obstacles will not prevent the free movement of the untrained defenders, who, in the opinion of the eminent novelist, will find no difficulty in manœuvring, so as to be in a position to always apply superior force in the place where such an application would be desirable.

Now in this theory lies a fallacy which may have the most serious consequences to the inhabitants of Great Britain. So serious indeed may the general adoption of such fallacious theories prove for the future of the British Empire, that I must here make a considerable digression in order to do the little that

is in my power to combat theories which are so attractive to the taxpayer, and which have been advanced with such command of language by so skilful a writer.

Moreover, I have not only to combat the arguments of the novelist, fully persuaded that in a few short months, instructed by his experience in one campaign carried on under very exceptional circumstances, he had made himself a master of the whole art of war, but I have also to contend with the public utterances of the Prime Minister, who has told us that the defence of this country is not so much a matter for the Government or the War Office, but rather concerns the civilian inhabitants of the country, who, in his opinion, can easily protect themselves against invasion by perfecting themselves in rifle shooting under the auspices of the Primrose League!

Should I endeavour single-handed to expose the fallacies underlying the attractive theories advanced by men of so great ability and such command of language, I fear that I should fail to carry conviction to my readers, and would only succeed in involving myself in a fog of words through which the drift of my argument could be but dimly seen. Consequently I shall make use of the arguments which have been so forcibly expressed by that able soldier and powerful military writer, Colonel Henderson, in the book in which he describes for us in glowing language the career of Stonewall Jackson, the celebrated Confederate general, a book which ought to be studied by every one who wishes to ascertain the strong and weak points of an army hastily levied and recruited from one of the most intelligent civil populations in the world.

But before quoting from Colonel Henderson, I will repeat the words used by General Johnston of the Confederate army in describing his march to Manassas to effect a junction with General Beauregard, who was in momentary expectation of an attack by superior forces of the Federals. General Johnston says: "The discouragements of that day's march, to one accustomed to the steady gait of regular soldiers, is indescribable. The views of military obedience and command then taken both by officers and men confined their duties and obligations almost exclusively to the drill ground and guards. In camp and marches they were scarcely known. Consequently, frequent and unreasonable delays caused so slow a rate of marching as to make me despair of joining General Beauregard in time to aid him." This is hardly eloquent praise of a citizen army; now listen to Colonel Henderson: "Lord Wolseley has been somewhat severely criticised for asserting that in the civil war, 'from first to last, the co-operation of even one army corps (35,000 men) of regular troops would have given complete victory to whichever side it fought on.' Whatever may be argued as to the latter period of the conflict, it is impossible for any one who understands the power of organisation, of discipline, of training, and of a proper system of command, to dispute the accuracy of this statement as regards the year 1861, that is, for the first eight months. It is far too often assumed that the number of able-bodied men is the true criterion of national strength. In the Confederate States, for instance, there were probably 750,000 citizens who were liable for service in the militia, and yet had the United

States possessed a single regular army corps, with a trained staff, an efficient commissariat, and a fully organised system of transport, it is difficult to see how these 750,000 Southerners could have done more than wage a guerilla warfare. The army corps would have absorbed into itself the best of the Northern militia and volunteers; the staff and commissariat would have given them mobility, and 60,000 or 70,000 men, moving on Richmond directly Sumter fell, with the speed and certainty which organisation gives, would have marched from victory to victory. Their 750,000 enemies would never have had time to arm, to assemble, to organise, to create an army, to train a staff, or to arrange for their supplies. Each gathering of volunteers would have been swept away before it had attained consistency, and Virginia, at least, must have been conquered in the first few months.

"And matters would have been no different if the army corps had been directed against the Union. In the Northern States there were over two million men who were liable for service; and yet the Union States, notwithstanding their superior resources, were just as vulnerable as the Confederacy. Numbers, if they amounted to millions, are useless, and worse than useless, without training and organisation; the more men that are collected on the battle-field, the more crushing and far-reaching their defeat. *Nor can the theory be sustained that a small army, invading a rich and populous country, would be 'stung to death' by the numbers of its foes*, even if they dare not oppose it in the open field. Of what avail were the stupendous efforts of the French Republic in 1870-71?

Enormous armies were raised and equipped; the ranks were filled with brave men; the generals were not unskilful; and yet time after time they were defeated by the far inferior forces of their seasoned enemy. Even in America itself, on two occasions—at Sharpsburg in 1862, and at Gettysburg in 1863—it was admitted by the North that the Southerners were 'within a stone's throw of independence.' And yet hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men had not yet joined the Federal armies. Nor can Spain be quoted as an instance of an unconquerable nation. Throughout the war with Napoleon the English armies, not only that under Wellington, but those at Cadiz, Tarifa, and Gibraltar, afforded solid rallying points for the defeated Spaniards, and by a succession of victories inspired the whole Peninsula with hope and courage. . . .

"*The patriot with a rifle may be equal, or even superior, man for man, to the professional soldier; but even patriots must be fed, and to win victories they must be able to manœuvre, and to manœuvre they must have leaders.* If it could remain stationary, protected by earthworks, and supplied by railways with which the enemy did not interfere, a host of hastily raised levies, if armed and equipped, might hold its own against even a regular army. But against troops which can manœuvre earthworks are useless, as the history of Sherman's brilliant operations in 1864 conclusively shows. To win battles and to protect their country armies must be capable of counter-manœuvre, and it is when troops are set in motion that the real difficulty of supplying them begins. If it is nothing else, the War of Secession,

with its awful expenditure of blood and treasure, is a most startling object-lesson in National Insurance." [The italics are mine].

Now these arguments, drawn as they are from the irrefutable lessons of history, appear to me quite unanswerable. The army composed of amateurs, of untrained riflemen, is doomed in advance to failure. Habits of obedience and of discipline must have been so engrained in the soldier as to form a second nature. Otherwise the force has no cohesion, and will not stand either the confusion of victory or the shock of defeat. Moreover, as Colonel Henderson so forcibly points out, how is an army consisting of a mob of untrained men to be manœuvred, to be subsisted, to be concentrated or dispersed at will by an amateur staff? It is, I know, a favourite theory with many people that it is possible to maintain a highly trained staff without going to the expense of keeping under arms an army. This is out of the question. A staff so maintained would necessarily be without opportunities for obtaining practical knowledge. Theory can do a great deal, but theory without practice will not make an efficient staff officer; consequently if we decide to go in for an amateur army, we shall have to accept the evil of an amateur staff.

But if there is a danger that the lessons of the Boer war may be so misread as to induce people to believe in the invincibility of an untrained citizen army, it is also possible that it may lead the same people to advocate the entire civilian control of all the military measures for the defence of this Empire. Even under our existing organisation, the military defences

of the Empire are unduly hampered by civilian control. The soldier who is for the time commander-in-chief of the British army is, after all, merely a figure-head, being quite powerless to introduce changes of system, of organisation, of armament, without the sanction of the civilian who happens for the moment to be Secretary of State for War. But this civilian, without military knowledge or experience, can at any moment, entirely of his own volition, and in defiance of the protests of the commander-in-chief and all the most experienced soldiers of the day, either veto such changes as the military authorities may believe to be of vital importance, or may introduce alterations of system or of armament which all military opinion may agree in condemning.

We have lately heard Lord Wolseley give public utterance to his feelings on this subject. He has pointed out that there is no manner in which the nation may be informed of military opinion in regard to the all-important subject of national defence, and that the commander-in-chief is tacitly assumed to concur in the recommendations of the Secretary of State for War, and is therefore regarded as in some measure responsible for measures which may have been put in force in direct opposition to his advice. Nor is Lord Wolseley's opinion on this subject one which he has newly formed. I hope that my readers will forgive me if, impressed as I am by the enormous importance of our maintaining always an efficient military force in these islands, I make a long quotation from the introduction which the late commander-in-chief wrote in 1899 to the book by Colonel Henderson from which I have quoted above.

Lord Wolseley says: "But the application of strategical and tactical principles, and the example of noble lives, are not the only or even the most valuable lessons of great wars. There are lessons which concern nations rather than individuals; and there are two to be learned from the Secession War which are of peculiar value to both England and the United States, whose armies are comparatively small and raised by voluntary enlistment. The first is the necessity of maintaining at all times (for it is impossible to predict what to-morrow may have in store for us) a well-organised standing army in the highest state of efficiency, and composed of thoroughly trained and full-grown men. This army to be large enough for our military requirements, and adapted to the character, the habits, and the traditions of the people. It is not necessary that the whole force should be actually serving during peace; one half of it, provided it is periodically drilled and exercised, can be formed into a reserve; the essential thing is that it should be as perfect a weapon as can be forged.

"The second lesson is that to hand over to civilians the administration and organisation of the army, whether in peace or in war, or to allow them to interfere in the selection of officers for command or promotion, is most injurious to efficiency; while, during war, to allow them, no matter how high their political capacity, to dictate to commanders in the field any line of conduct, after the army has once received its commission, is simply to ensure disaster. The first of these lessons is brought home to us by the opening events of this unreasonably protracted war. As I have elsewhere said, most military

students will admit that had the United States been able, early in 1861, to put into the field, in addition to their volunteers, one army corps of regular troops, the war would have ended in a few months. An enormous expenditure of life and money, as well as a serious dislocation and loss of trade, would have been thus avoided. Never have the evil consequences which follow upon the absence of an adequate and well-organised army been more forcibly exemplified.

"But, alas! when this lesson is preached in a country governed alternately by rival political parties, and when there is no immediate prospect of national danger, it falls on deaf ears. The demands made by the soldiers to put the army on a thoroughly efficient footing are persistently ignored, for the necessary means are almost invariably required for some other object, more popular at the moment and in the parliamentary—or party—sense more useful. The most scathing comment on such a system of administration is furnished in the story told by Colonel Henderson. The fearful trials to which the United States were subjected exposed the folly and self-deception of which even well-meaning party leaders are too often capable. Ministers bluster about fighting and yet refuse to spend enough money on the army to make it fit for use; and on both sides of the Atlantic the lessons taught by the Peninsula, the Crimea, and the Secession Wars are but seldom remembered. The pleasing notion that, whenever war comes, money can obtain for the nation all that it requires is still, it would seem, an article of at least lip faith with the politicians of the English-speaking race throughout the world. Gold will certainly buy

a nation powder, pills, and provisions; but no amount of wealth, even when supported by a patriotic willingness to enlist, can buy discipline, training, and skilful leading. Without these there can be no such thing as an efficient army, and success in the field against serious opposition is merely the idle dream of those who know not war. If any nation could improvise an army at short notice it would be the United States, for its men, all round, are more hardy, more self-reliant, and quicker to learn than those of older communities. But, notwithstanding this advantage, both in 1861 and in 1898, the United States failed to create the thoroughly efficient armies so suddenly required, and in both instances the unnecessary sufferings of the private soldier were the price paid for the weakness and folly of the politicians. In 1861, the governors of the several Northern States were ordered to call for volunteers to enlist for ninety days, the men electing their own officers. It was generally believed throughout the North that all Southern resistance would collapse before the great armies that would thus be raised. But the troops sent out to crush the rebellion, when they first came under fire, were soldiers only in outward garb, and at Bull Run, face to face with shot and shell, they soon lapsed into the condition of a terrified rabble, and ran away from another rabble almost equally demoralised; and this, not because they were cowards, for they were of the same breed as the young regular soldiers who retreated from the same field in such excellent order, but because they neither understood what discipline was, nor the necessity for it, and because the staff and regimental officers, with few exceptions, were untrained and inexperienced. . . .

"Let me now dwell briefly upon the second of the two great national lessons taught by the Secession War. I shall say nothing here upon civilian meddling with army organisation and with the selection of officers for command, but I wish particularly to point out the result of interference on the part of the legislative assembly or minister with the plans and dispositions of the generals commanding in the field. Take first the notorious instance of Mr Lincoln's interference with Maclellan in the spring of 1862. Maclellan, who was the officer selected to command the army which was to capture Richmond and end the war, was a soldier of known ability, and, in my opinion, if he had not been interfered with by the Cabinet in Washington, he would probably have succeeded. It is true, as Colonel Henderson has said, that he made a mistake in not playing up to Lincoln's susceptibilities with regard to the safety of the Federal capital. But Lincoln made a far greater mistake in suddenly reducing Maclellan's army by 40,000 men, and by removing Banks from his jurisdiction, when the plan of campaign had been approved by the Cabinet, and it was already too late to change it. It is possible, considering the political situation, that the garrison of Washington was too small, and it was certainly inefficient; but the best way of protecting Washington was to give Maclellan the means of advancing rapidly upon Richmond. Such an advance would have made a Confederate counter-stroke against the Northern capital, or even a demonstration, impossible. But to take away from Maclellan 40,000 men, the very force with which he intended to turn the York Town lines and to drive the enemy back

on Richmond, and at the same time to isolate Banks in the Shenandoah valley, was simply playing into the enemy's hands. What Lincoln did not see was that to divide the Federal army into three portions, working on three separate lines, was to run a far greater risk than would be incurred by leaving Washington weakly garrisoned. I cannot bring myself to believe that he in the least realised all that was involved in changing a plan of operations so vast as Maclellan's. . . . The truth is that a certain class of civilians cannot rid themselves of the suspicion that soldiers are consumed by an inordinate and bloodthirsty ambition. They cannot understand that a man brought up from his youth to render loyal obedience is less likely than most others to run counter to constituted authority. They will not see that a soldier's pride in his own army, and in the manhood of his own race, tends to make him a devoted patriot. They do not realise that a commander's familiarity with war, whether gained by study or experience, must, unless his ability be limited, enable him to accommodate his strategy to political exigencies. Nor will they admit that he can possess a due sense of economy, although none knows better than an educated soldier the part played in war by a sound and thrifty administration of the national resources. The soldier, on the other hand, knows that his art is most difficult—that to apply strategical principles correctly, experience, study, knowledge of men, and an intimate acquaintance with questions of supply, transport, and the movement of masses, are absolutely necessary. He is aware that what may seem matters of small moment to the civilian—such as the position of a brigade, the strength of a

garrison, the command of a detachment — may affect the whole course of a campaign; and consequently, if he had not the historical examples of Aulic Councils and other such assemblies to warn him, he would rebel against the meddling of amateurs. Let it not be forgotten that an enormous responsibility rests on the shoulders of a commander in the field—the honour of the army committed to his charge, the lives of the brave men under him, perhaps the existence of his country; and that failure, even if he can plead that he only obeyed the orders of his Government, or that he was supplied with inadequate means, will be laid at his door. Macdowell received no mercy after Bull Run, although he had protested against attacking the Confederates; and it was long before the reputation of Sir John Moore was cleared in the eyes of the English people."

I am afraid that my readers may begin to think by this time that I am wandering far from my immediate subject, the training of the British recruit, and that the remarks on the evils of civilian interference with the organisation, the administration, and the direction of armies have little or nothing to do with the matter in hand. But it must not be forgotten that the efficiency of an army depends very greatly on the efficiency of the individuals of which it is composed, and that both Lord Wolseley's and Colonel Henderson's words dealing with the vital principles underlying all sound systems of military administration, are as appropriate to the training of the recruit as to the handling of an army corps.

The soldier realises both the end which he has in

view and the means by which alone that end can be reached. Fully alive as he is to the enormous importance of maintaining at a high level the discipline of the army, he cannot but realise the grave danger to which we expose ourselves by listening to the crude theories of civilians with no real knowledge of warfare, theories which are all the more dangerous from being clothed in the picturesque language at the command of one of the ablest writers of the present day.

The critic who argues that the undisciplined rifleman is the equal of the highly trained soldier for purposes of home defence will next argue that a civil minister is equally capable with the experienced officer of directing great operations of war, consequently I have thought it not unwise to call to my aid the highest authorities to prove that the art of warfare is one which can only be understood, even in its most elementary principles, by those who have devoted a great deal of time to its study, and that if it be wise to entrust the professional officer with the handling of an army, it is also wise to leave to him the manner in which the soldier who is to form a unit in that army shall be trained from the beginning. Having endeavoured to make this clear, I shall now go on to an account of the manner in which the recruit is prepared for the serious duties of his profession, an account which I will now reserve for the following chapter. The above, however, must not be taken as conflicting with the statement with which I opened this book, that the average civilian of robust commonsense and with a fair knowledge of military organisation, ought to be quite capable of shrewdly and correctly judging the capacity, the merits and demerits, of military leaders.

CHAPTER VI

WHETHER the young soldier is destined for service in the artillery, the cavalry, or the infantry, he must first be taught the necessity of cheerful and instant obedience to the orders of his superior. He must, in fact, be taught in a measure to surrender his individuality to the wishes of his superiors, and with this object, and in order to make it possible to place him without confusion exactly in the place where he may be required, he is taught drill. He is taught to march to the right, to the left, to the front, or to the rear, in instant obedience to the orders of his officer; he is taught to stand silent and motionless in the ranks, and to keep his attention fixed on the words or signals of his commander.

When off parade he is still for some time under instruction. He is shown the manner in which his kit must be kept clean, the manner in which every article of his clothing must be folded, and he is impressed with the necessity for keeping his person, his arms, his equipment, and his clothing always clean and fit for service. The difficulties in the way of personal cleanliness in barracks I have already alluded to; I may here refer briefly to the work of cleaning his arms, clothing, and accoutrements. As most people are aware, the accoutrements of the large majority

of regiments in the British army, both cavalry, infantry, and artillery, are made of buff leather, which the soldier is expected to keep spotlessly white by the aid of pipeclay.

I don't know whether any of my readers have had any experience in pipeclaying buff leather straps, but if so they will be able to sympathise with Tommy Atkins. It will take an infantry soldier several hours to thoroughly clean the whole of his equipment for marching order, and when clean it must be most carefully guarded from dust or from spotting by any liquid, otherwise the work will have to be done all over again. Should a drop of the oil with which the soldier cleans his arms fall upon the buff leather of his equipment, it will be a matter of great difficulty to remove it, and should he, when dressed, be caught in a sharp shower, the pipeclay will be washed from his belts into his clothes with the most unfortunate results to his appearance. If he be in the cavalry he will have to use ochre as well to give the bright yellow hue to the braid upon his jacket and to the stripes on his trousers, and as he will also have to parade with his saddlery spotlessly clean and with all the steel work about his equipment burnished like silver, the labour of preparing him for parade will be even greater than that which the infantry soldier has to undergo.

I hope that before the year is over pipeclay will have been banished from the British army. There are absolutely no advantages attending its use; it is only a continued source of irritation to both officers and men, and it is not too much to say that it leads

indirectly to more discontent, and to as much desertion, as anything else connected with the daily life of the soldier. Over and over again the adoption of straps of brown leather has been advocated, but all the arguments in favour of the easily cleaned brown leather have been overruled by the assertion that it is not possible to ensure that all brown leather straps should be continually kept of precisely the same shade! This sounds ridiculous, but it is absolutely true. So wedded are we to pipeclay and to all that is implied by the word, that we willingly forego any real military advantage which the adoption of brown leather might confer, owing to the assumed necessity for absolute uniformity even in the shade of colour of our soldiers' belts. It is impossible to convince the rulers of our army that soldiers may be equally efficient whether their belts are of precisely the same shade or not, and that it will be a wise act to remove without delay a form of equipment which has no real military advantage beyond ensuring a uniformity of appearance, which, after all, is only obtainable at the cost of great labour to the individual soldier. Were the easily cleaned brown leather substituted, it would be possible to employ the long hours now devoted to pipeclaying, in teaching the soldier something which would be really useful to him, either while he is in the army or after he has left it.

But in addition to pipeclaying his straps, the soldier has to polish his buttons and the metal work in his equipment or on his clothing, till they shine like stars, though it is really of importance that there should be nothing whatever about a soldier's dress which might catch the eye at a distance. No one

would complain if the soldier was only required to dazzle the eye in his "swagger" walking-out dress, a certain amount of glitter is excusable, nay, necessary, in a soldier in his best; but it is a serious matter for complaint that he is compelled to furbish in this manner the buttons and metal-work about his working dress. I hope that the year which sees the abolition of pipeclay for good and all, will also see the introduction of a sensible fighting and working dress, which can be kept clean with the least possible labour, which will stand any amount of really hard wear, and which will confer the benefit of comparative invisibility upon the wearer.

However, to return to the subject of the daily life of the soldier from which I have so often wandered, I must preface my account of his work by the statement that early rising is one of the chief military virtues. The soldier is required to rise at reveillé, which sounds usually at 5.30 in summer and at 6.30 in the dark days of winter. On the bugles or trumpets sounding, every man in the barrack-room is required to rise at once, and to set to work to tidy up the barrack-room and to roll up his bed in the orthodox manner. If in the cavalry, stables must then be attended to, as in the summer "stables" will be sounded at 6 A.M., and from 6 to 7 the soldier's time will be fully occupied in grooming his horse and in cleaning out his stall. In the winter the morning stable hour is from 6.30 to 7.30, from which it may be inferred that the cavalry soldier has rather more work to put in in the morning than his comrade in the infantry, an inference which would be quite justified by the facts of the case.

In the infantry the soldier will, as a rule, have little to do but to clean up his barrack-room and arrange his kit, in addition to getting dressed and shaved, till half-past six or a quarter to seven, when his presence will be required either on parade or on fatigue.

I may here be permitted to interpolate a short explanation as to the military significance of the word "fatigue." All labour required to keep the barracks in order, to clean the various buildings and institutions inside the barrack gates, all duties in short not immediately concerned with the military training of the troops, are regarded as "fatigues." Thus the party required to unload baggage at a railway station, to place baggage on board ship or on transport waggons, to carry coals, to scrub out the officers' mess or the hospital, the sergeants' mess or the canteen, to clean up litter from the barrack square, or to perform any one of the numerous tasks which have somehow or other to be carried out daily in barracks, is termed a "fatigue party." It is popularly supposed by civilians that soldiers hate fatigue duty; this is, however, not the case, as whether the work is popular or not depends chiefly on its nature and on the hour at which it has to be carried out. The ordinary fatigues about barracks, which exempt a soldier from attendance at one of the regular parades, are far from being unpopular, but Tommy does not at all relish being "warned" for a fatigue which will take up the time in the afternoons which he has come to regard as at his own disposal. On fatigue, men are naturally allowed to wear their oldest clothes, and one of the first acts of the prudent recruit will be to purchase at the auction, held on the death or desertion of a soldier,

clothing for purposes of fatigue duty. Otherwise he will soon destroy his bright uniform and will be certainly "spotted" by his captain and ordered to buy new.

Here let me give a word of advice to the young soldier. Spare no pains to convince your captain that you are a "clean soldier." I have known men of indifferent character who would have been endlessly in trouble but for the fact that they could always be relied on to turn out smart and clean. An officer feels that a man of this description, however troublesome he may be in other respects, will never "give him away" by appearing dirty on parade, consequently he feels much more inclined to look over his offences than if he were perhaps a better character, but a man who had not mastered the art of turning out like a new pin on an inspection parade. It is good for the soldier if his captain can say of him "he is a good shot," but it is better if he can say "he is a clean soldier." In itself this is not a bad hint at the real defects of our military system.

The recruit on joining has, as a rule, to attend four parades a day, in addition to fatigues at odd hours, and the usual hours for parade are from 6.45 to 7.45, from 9 to 10, from 11 to 12, and from 2 to 3. At some of these parades he will be merely drilled in the elementary movements of infantry drill, in the cavalry of "foot drill," which is not quite the same, but at others he will be initiated ere long into the system of free gymnastics, first introduced by Colonel Fox, which has done so much of late years for the physical condition of the British soldier. He

will, I fear, soon find his drill, the continual "right turn," "left turn," "front form squad," "rear form squad," somewhat monotonous and uninteresting, but he will, unless very different from the average recruit, be greatly interested in his physical training, though the first few hours' drill will bring to his painful notice a large number of muscles which he had been previously ignorant that he possessed.

He will be surprised at learning that he has not hitherto known how to breathe properly, one of his first lessons being devoted to the art of "deep breathing," and he will at first find the hopping and high stepping exercises very amusing. They may cease to strike him as funny after a little, but the advanced exercises, and especially the work with apparatus in the gymnasium, will be far more interesting to him than any of the barrack-square drill of which he has probably already begun to tire. But barrack-square drill has its uses after all, for without it, it would be impossible to manœuvre large masses through all the confusion and excitement of a battle-field.

At the depot the recruit will also make the acquaintance of his rifle, or rather of *a* rifle, for the weapon with which he will be provided will be probably one marked "D. P." signifying that it is to be used for drill purposes only, being unsafe for actual use with service charges. With this rifle he will, however, be taught the manual and firing exercises, and also the bayonet exercise, the latter being of little or no practical use, but merely a gymnastic exercise calculated to develop the biceps and shoulder muscles of the young soldier. In addition to the various drills which I have described, the recruit is also instructed

in running drill, which usually takes place before breakfast, and which consists in running round the barrack square a certain number of times at a pace not exceeding six miles an hour. Theoretically every soldier is supposed to be able at any time to run a thousand yards in seven minutes, and to be free from distress at the end of it; in practice, well, that is another matter. On the whole the recruit should have a fairly good time at the depot, though, of course, a great deal will depend on the man himself, and even more on the comrades round him, and on the officers and non-commissioned officers—the latter especially—in immediate command over him.

To my mind the great fault in our present system of preliminary instruction in our army is that nothing like sufficient care is taken in the selection of the non-commissioned officers and men for service at the regiment depot, and that no attempt at all is made to select for service at the depot officers who are likely to take a special interest in the work of superintending the training of recruits.

It is an old saying, and I believe a true one, that the child is the father of the man; were this great truth sufficiently realised, no pains would be spared to ensure that the recruit had round him at the most impressionable period of his life only those officers, non-commissioned officers, and men who were likely by their influence and example to have a good effect upon him. At present, from the commanding officer downward, not a single individual is selected for service at the depot from any belief that he is in any way qualified to instruct recruits.

The colonel of the depot, who is also the officer

in command of the regimental district, is given the appointment, which he holds for five years or till he has attained the age of fifty-seven, merely because there is nothing against his character as an officer. It is in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the last active military command which he can ever exercise. He has reached the crown of his career; he has nothing to look forward to; ambition is dead within him, and it is impossible to expect him to show any zeal or to go out of his way to make the most of the recruits commencing their military career under his command. As a rule, he doses quietly through his five years, only anxious for peace and quiet, thinking more of the approaching date when he will be able to retire on his £500 a year than of any possibility of future employment. To this there are, of course, exceptions. I have met one or two of the best and smartest officers I have ever found in the army in command of depots, but so far as their future career was concerned, they might just as well have let things slide like their predecessors. Over the quarters assigned to the commanding officer of a depot might well be written, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

As for the other officers assigned, usually for two years, for duty at the depot, in not one case out of a hundred have they been selected for any special qualifications. In fact they are more probably "stellenbosched" to the depot owing to an absence of any special qualifications. No colonel likes to lose his smartest officers; few officers of ambition care to volunteer for depot service; consequently either the officers whose retention with the regiment

is least desirable are selected, or as is done in some corps, officers are sent in their turn, regardless of whether they wish to go or are specially qualified for the work there or not. Where regiments are serving abroad in unpleasant stations, there is naturally often a good deal of competition for a spell at the depot; but here again the last thing which enters into the consideration of the commanding officer is whether the officer selected has any particular aptitude for the instruction of recruits.

If this is the case with officers, it is equally so with the non-commissioned officers and men, though the results are more unfortunate in their case, as they are naturally brought much more into contact with the recruits than are the officers. It is hardly likely, human nature being what it is, that any colonel will send his smartest non-commissioned officers or men to serve at the depot. He is much more likely to send those who are growing fat and lazy, who, as a rule, are those most likely to volunteer for the job. This is, in my opinion, the chief blot on the existing depot system.

If the young soldier, however, is able to get on comfortably with the non-commissioned officers and men around him, and the way to a good understanding with them is usually lubricated by beer, he will find the life at the depot enjoyable enough. Being a young soldier he will be obliged to be in barracks by 9.30, not yet being eligible for more than an occasional pass, but, so long as he is well-conducted and keeps in the good graces of his captain and colour-sergeant, he will have no difficulty in getting home for week-ends to enjoy the

society of his friends and relations and to air his new red coat in his native village.

But his stay at the depot will not be a very long one. Recruits are sent to the home battalions of their regiments in batches eight times a year on one of the following dates: 7th January, 21st February, 7th April, 21st May, 7th July, 21st August, 15th October, and the 21st November; consequently within about three months from his enlistment the recruit will be warned that he is for the next draft for the regiment, and on one of the above-mentioned dates he will, in company with a number of others, be marched out of the barrack gates on his way to the battalion which will be his home till his turn comes for the foreign draft.

Before quitting for good the subject of depot life it may interest my reader to be given some information as to the amount of weekly pay which can usually be drawn by recruits at the depot of an infantry regiment.

As I have already explained, the pay of the young soldier in the infantry of the line is one shilling a day, from this must be deducted 3d. a day for his messing—a deduction from which he escapes on attaining the age of nineteen years and on being certified to be an efficient soldier—of 1d. per day for washing, and of ½d. per day for hair-cutting. In each company it is usual to appoint one man as company hair-cutter; to this man the money stopped for hair-cutting is handed over, and in return he has to cut the hair of the men as often as may be necessary. In addition to the above-mentioned deductions, the soldier will probably be

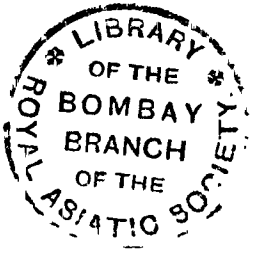
a subscriber to the library, which will cost him 3d. a month; consequently we find that the total unavoidable deductions from the pay of the recruit in a month of thirty-one days will amount to 11s. 10½d. But there will usually be some other small deductions from the pay of even the well-conducted and careful soldier, owing to his having incurred charges for repairs at the regimental tailor's or shoemaker's shop, while he may also have been permitted to run up a limited "tick" at the library.

I have before me as I write the pay list of a depot company, and in that I find that the most pay drawn in a month of thirty-one days by a recruit amounts to 16s., leaving him with a balance credit of 5d., the sum of 14s. being charged to him for regimental bills, a term which includes charges for washing, hair-cutting, etc., and 7d. being charged on account of stoppages due to the public, probably on account of barrack damages. This man's account is, I think, fairly representative, and though we are constantly informed that it will be necessary to raise the soldier's pay in order to get the number of recruits which we now require, there are not many civilian occupations in which a young man without any previous training can put 4s. a week into his pocket after paying for his lodging, his clothes, and his food.

It is perhaps hardly fair to claim that this sum of 4s. per week is clear profit after paying for everything, because, as I have already pointed out, most young soldiers, and many old ones too, find it necessary to supplement the official meals by an extra meal in the form of

supper in the recreation room. But a satisfying supper can be obtained in most regimental coffee shops for a couple of pence, and calculating that the recruit spends 2d. every evening on his supper, we shall find that his accounts at the end of the month will show that he may receive 11s. in cash payments and have 4d. to his credit to start the following month.

I must confess that I think the young soldier is well paid by his country; as we trace the soldier through the later stages of his career we shall, however, find that this liberality is not extended to him throughout his service.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER VII

WHEN the young recruit joins his regiment, he finds to his disgust and surprise that his military education is very far from complete. Even the squad drill, which he fondly imagined he had done with for ever, will have to be attacked again, and in addition to this he will be at once taken for a recruit's course of gymnastics, and will also have to commence his first course of instruction in musketry. I do not suppose that my readers will be interested in a detailed statement of the various drills and exercises through which all recruits have to pass on joining their home battalions; it will be sufficient if I say that they have to undergo a twelve weeks' course of gymnastic training, commencing with ten hours a week of gymnastics with apparatus and ten hours without apparatus, the latter being reduced to eight hours after the first four weeks. In addition to the gymnastics the recruits renew their acquaintance with the bayonet exercise, are taught to march and to carry a kit, and on the average put in some forty hours' work in the week, or considerably less than the eight hours a day which is regarded as the regulation

amount of work for men in civil employment, or perhaps I should rather say the ideal after which civilians strive, and in many occupations strive in vain. In addition to the forty hours of instruction which the recruit has to go through in each week, he may also be required to perform certain fatigues, but he will be spared work of this sort as much as possible till his education is complete, when he will have to perform his share of the labour necessary to carry on the routine of the barracks.

I think that very few people realise the magnificent manner in which the young soldier is developed physically by the scientifically regulated course of gymnastic training to which all recruits are subjected.

The hideous and shapeless scarlet serge frock of the infantry soldier of the line conceals, as a rule, a very well knit, compact, and muscular figure. It has been of late the fashion for civilians, ignorant of what they are talking about, to run down the young British soldier, and to describe him as physically a miserable specimen of poorly-developed, narrow-chested humanity. So artfully is the kersey frock devised to conceal the muscular proportions of the wearer that it is hardly surprising that people, who never see Tommy in the "buff," should form such erroneous ideas regarding his physique, but let those who still doubt what I say on the subject take an early opportunity of paying a visit to a military gymnasium during working hours—and at most gymnasia visitors are wisely welcomed—and they will quickly be converted to the belief that there are few classes of men who can produce a better physical average than the infantry of the line of the British army.

When the soldier has finished his gymnastic course, or occasionally before, he is taken in hand by the assistant-adjutant and instructed in the theory and practice of musketry.

Now musketry is the most important part of the training of a soldier for war, as however good he may be in other respects, he is obviously next door to useless if he is unable to slay his enemy after he has been transported at considerable trouble and expense to the seat of war. The soldier who cannot shoot is even more useless than the soldier who cannot march, or the cavalry soldier who cannot ride. The infantry soldier ought to be an expert shot and a well-trained marcher; unfortunately, though in this respect matters are a little better than formerly, there is still very great room for improvement both in the shooting and in the marching of the British soldier.

The recruit commences his musketry training by being taught how to aim and sight his rifle, and being instructed in the theory of musketry by the subaltern who holds the appointment of assistant-adjutant. Unfortunately for him the assistant-adjutant, who has been taught to deliver, parrot-wise, the lectures which he had to learn at Hythe, rarely succeeds in conveying any but the most confused ideas to the mind of the average recruit. The system, of which our military authorities are so fond, of compelling military precepts to be committed to heart and learnt by rote, is very much to blame for the small amount of good which is effected by the School of Musketry at Hythe. My civilian readers will hardly, I fear, credit the statement that the

officers who attend the School of Musketry as students are required to learn by heart the four lectures in the red book on the theory of musketry, in the same manner as the non-commissioned officers, and officers as well, are required to repeat, without the misplacing of a single word, the whole of the cautions and explanations dealing with the firing exercise. Instruction imparted in this manner is practically worthless. The young officer may understand the meaning of the sentences which he gabbles with so much fluency, but I fear that very few recruits are any the wiser as to what is intended to be conveyed by the words "theory of musketry" at the end of their course than they were at the beginning.

Again, to attain any proficiency with the rifle in the field, where ranges are not measured out, at any rate for the attackers, and where the neat black and white targets of the rifle range are conspicuous by their absence, it is most essential that great pains should be taken to make soldiers really good judges of distance.

Can it be believed that in the present enlightened days even less trouble is taken to make our soldiers good judges of distance than was the case fifteen or twenty years ago? Twenty years ago prizes were annually given for judging distance, the men were regularly put through a number of exercises in which they had to estimate the distances of various objects, and their answers were carefully recorded, but now, though troops are annually taken out to judge distance, the whole thing has degenerated into a farce, as no prizes for skill are given, and it is a matter of no importance whatever whether the

soldier judges well or badly. As for the recruit, he is only required to do six judging distance exercises in his course, so it is hardly surprising if he knows very little more about it at the end than he did at the beginning.

Again, as to his practical instruction in musketry, it is at once perfectly obvious to any one who knows anything about rifle shooting, more especially to any one who has taken up rifle shooting as a hobby, that it is quite hopeless to expect to make a man a fair shot with the present miserable allowance of practice ammunition. Only 189 rounds are allotted to the recruit in his recruit's course; the first 77 rounds he fires at distances varying from 200 to 400 yards at targets varying from 4 feet to 6 feet square, firing 21 rounds standing, 35 rounds kneeling, the remainder lying down. If he succeeds in making the modest score of 175 under these circumstances, his weapon, be it remembered, being one with which men have made 7 consecutive bulls at 1000 yards, he is permitted to continue his course.

Should he fail, he is put back, and—very properly—kept at the elementary course till he obtains the required minimum. The men who succeed at the first trial, the vast majority, I am glad to say, continue their course by firing 35 more rounds in deliberate individual practices, in which the result of each shot is signalled, winding up with 7 shots at 800 yards, and then, after firing 28 rounds in rapid individual from the magazine, fire the remainder of the rounds allotted in sectional practices, such as deliberate and rapid volleys, and independent firing. So far as it

goes, the course is good enough; my complaint is that it goes such a pitifully small way.

Unless a man be a fine shot by nature, and such men exist though they are rare, he will have learnt little more than the elements of rifle shooting by the time he has finished his recruit's course, but as he will have fired then many more rounds in individual practices than he will ever again be permitted to fire in any one year during the remainder of his service, the chances of his becoming a really expert shot are exceedingly remote. Considering that it is universally admitted that it is a matter of the utmost importance that our soldiers should be made good rifle shots, it is extraordinary that their training is carried out on such unpractical lines. It is to be earnestly hoped that one of the results of the Boer war will be a revision of the entire system of musketry training in the British army.

Supposing that the recruit whose career we are following has gone into the cavalry instead of the infantry, he will have to wait rather longer before commencing his first course of musketry, as he will not be available for it till he has passed out of the riding school, in which he will probably spend from two to three months. But before learning to ride he will have to learn his foot-drill, and will also receive instruction in stable duties, fencing, and the care of his arms and saddlery. Altogether the cavalry recruit has considerably harder work than his comrade in the infantry, though to a man fond of and accustomed to horses, a great deal of the work will be congenial.

The artillery recruit, however, has probably the

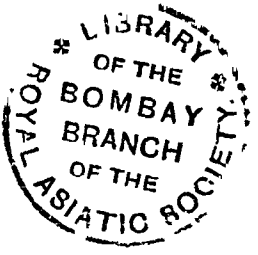
hardest work of all. Not only has he to master the mystery of foot-drill, to learn riding and driving, and to go through a course of gymnastics similar to that to which cavalry and infantry recruits are subjected, but he has to make himself a master both of the carbine and of the field-gun, his legitimate weapon. I am afraid that I am somewhat exaggerating in saying that the young gunner has to make himself a "master" of his carbine, as it is hardly possible for him to attain great proficiency in its use with an allowance of only fourteen rounds of ammunition, all of which he fires at 200 yards, but still he has to drill and fire with the carbine as well as with the gun, and has in addition to receive instruction in handling ammunition, in mounting and dismounting guns, in packing waggons, in loading and unloading trucks, and in the construction of gun pits and gun epaulements, the former being shallow excavations from which a gun may be fired, the latter being twin mounds of earth, excavated from a trench in front, from behind which a gun may come into action in comparative security from the fire of an enemy.

As for the time which it takes to train a recruit for each of the three arms, without any attempt to lay down a hard and fast limit, for in such a matter a good deal must depend on the intelligence and natural aptitude for his work of the man himself, I do not think I am far wrong in stating that the average infantry recruit can be trained in about six months, while the cavalry recruit will require at least eight months, and the gunner a month or two longer.

As far as pay is concerned both the cavalryman and the artilleryman, if harder worked than Tommy

in the line, receive slightly better pay, the cavalry private drawing 1s. 2d. a day, or 1s. 9d. if in the Household Cavalry, while the artillery gunner or driver starts his career with 1s. 2½d. a day, his more fortunate comrade in the Royal Horse Artillery, that *corps d'élite*, being paid a halfpenny more.

Here we will leave the recruit for the present, his recruit days almost over, to trace his subsequent career in the following chapters.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CHAPTER VIII

ONE of the first disagreeables which confronts the young soldier on taking his place among the "duty men" of his company is "guard duty." Of late years, I am glad to say that there has been a tendency to reduce considerably the number of sentry posts in most garrisons, but even now there are many guards maintained which are of no earthly use, and which have no effect but to increase the amount of unnecessary work which the soldier has to perform, while perfectly useless so far as adding to his military value is concerned.

It is, and has been for years, a saying in the British army that a regiment is judged more by the "smartness" of its guards and sentries, and by the saluting of the men when walking out, than by its proficiency in any other military exercise.

A smart sentry is one who moves briskly and in what is termed a "soldier-like" fashion upon his post, who is spotlessly clean in his dress and equipment, and who handles his arms with great rapidity and precision. A smart guard is one which "turns out" as one man on occasion arising, which also turns out with great rapidity and with all its men clean and "regular," and which salutes with the precision of clockwork on the order of its commander.

Needless to say, so long as regiments are judged more by their guards and sentries than by their shooting or their marching powers, so long will the regimental authorities pay more attention to mere mechanical perfection in drill than to exercises of a greater and more real military value. Consequently hours are spent in instructing troops in the minutiæ of guard and sentry duty, duties which have no relation whatever to the important duties which sentries have to perform in war time, but which, on the contrary, tend rather to lessen than to increase the intelligence and self-reliance of the individual soldier.

When on guard his every movement is defined in the strictest possible manner by regulation; for the time being he is compelled to absolutely sink his individuality, and the more nearly he can approximate to a lay figure worked by clockwork the smarter soldier he will be considered by his adjutant, sergeant-major, and commanding officer. Hence I do not think we shall be far wrong in coming to the conclusion that the absurd amount of importance which is now attached to duties on guard and sentry is positively injurious to the real military efficiency of the soldier, tending to destroy his reasoning powers, to stupefy his brain, and to reduce him to a mere automaton incapable of action without the direction of a superior.

That this is the case may also be inferred from what any old adjutant will tell you, namely, that there is only one thing which makes troops more "unsoldier-like" (!) than musketry or manœuvres, and that is active service! That is to say when troops have become veterans in the field,

and have learnt to appreciate at their true value the senseless drills and formalities to which so great importance has been attached in the early days of their training, it is impossible to reduce them again to the condition of senseless automata which they had attained under careful instruction in days of peace.

In every company a roster is kept on which the names of all men liable to guard duty, that is to say, of all men who are not specially employed or attending courses, etc., are entered. The sergeant-major informs the orderly sergeants of companies over night how many men he will require from each company for guard on the following day, and on receipt of this information the orderly sergeants "warn" the requisite number of men in the order in which their names stand on the roster.

When a man has been warned for guard his first duty is to clean his whole equipment with the utmost care, for the searching inspection of the adjutant on "guard-mounting parade" is something to be dreaded by the slovenly soldier, and little mercy is shown to the man who appears on this important parade with ill-brushed clothes, with straps or valise awry, or with smudges or specks on what should be the spotless surface of his pipeclayed belts.

The careful soldier will spend probably several hours over his kit and arms before he is satisfied that they are clean enough to defy criticism, when they will be carefully covered up with a towel and placed on the shelf or on the pegs, to be again keenly scrutinised on the following morning. In most garrisons at home the guards mount at 9.30 or 10. A.M. on their battalion parade grounds. After inspection they are

marched by their commanders to the guard allotted to them, on arrival at which their first duty is to relieve the guard which has been doing duty since the previous morning. The old guard and sentries being relieved, it is marched back to its barracks to be dismissed, and the new guard is installed for a tour of duty which lasts twenty-four hours.

Each soldier is required to do two hours on sentry and four hours off, consequently there will be always three men for each sentry post, and in addition one or more non-commissioned officers, according to the strength of the guard, and a bugler. When a man is placed on sentry he is required either to walk smartly and briskly to and fro—always turning to his "front" in turning about—or to stand correctly in that constrained attitude known in the army as "standing at ease."

He is not allowed to lounge or to stroll leisurely on his post, nor is he permitted to enter his sentry-box unless in wet or very stormy weather. He must give the guard—supposing him to be stationed at the guard-room door—timely notice of the approach of the field officer or other officer of the day, to whom the guard will be required to turn out smartly, and he must be punctillious to giving—again "smartly"—to every passing officer the salute to which his rank entitles him. At the end of two hours he sings out "sentry go," and is then relieved by the next sentry with many weird and old-world ceremonies, handing over to his successor the orders of his post, and withdrawing to the guard-room, where, however, he is not permitted to remove any of his accoutrements, but where he may, in winter, crouch on a form over a fire, or else

snatch a few hours' uneasy sleep till his turn for sentry comes round again. At *reveillé*, *retreat*, and *tattoo* the whole guard is required to turn out under arms for inspection by its commander, and it is also required to be in readiness to turn out at any moment during the twenty-four hours of duty to grand or visiting rounds (the field officer or other officer of the day), and in case of fire or any *émeute* in the garrison.

Behind the guard-room is the "prisoners' room," a large room, lighted by a narrow barred window and furnished with a kind of wooden inclined plane, which passes for a bed, on which the prisoners can seek the repose for which they are usually disposed in consequence of their condition. In the prisoners' room are confined (a military term for men in custody awaiting "disposal" by their commanding officer or trial by court-martial) men who have been guilty of any of the more serious military offences, such as gross insubordination, drunkenness, desertion, or prolonged absence without leave. These men as a rule give no trouble, unless in the case of men who are violently drunk and consequently noisy, and they are visited once in the twenty-four hours by an officer to whom they can make any complaint of improper treatment.

Attached to most guard-rooms are cells, and very contumacious or troublesome men are usually forced into one of these, where they are less likely to disturb the guard or any other prisoners. Once on guard no soldier is permitted to leave the guard-room, and it is a very serious military offence for a soldier to quit

his post or to be found asleep while on sentry. While in the regular army great pride is taken in the exactitude with which all guard duties are performed, the same standard is hardly attained in regiments belonging to the auxiliary forces, where time is not available for instructing the men in all the niceties of guard duty.

Consequently there are many amusing stories current in the army at the expense of the militia and volunteers, illustrating the slackness with which guard and sentry duties are performed in those branches of the service. I am afraid most of these stories will be chestnuts to my military readers, but there is one from which I cannot refrain, and which may be new to many civilians.

A certain Irish militia regiment had to furnish the main guard in a large garrison. On the field officer of the day visiting the guard, to his surprise he found no sentry on the post, and, wrathful at his discovery, entered the guard-room to ascertain the cause. The guard-room was empty, with the exception of one very dirty militiaman crouching over the glowing ashes of the fire, who turned on his seat and gazed at the irate field officer with mingled curiosity and admiration.

The Field Officer.—"Where the devil is the sentry?"

Dirty Militiaman.—"The sintry, is it? Begad, he's away beyant (with a vague wave of a foul clay pipe) kicking football."

Field Officer.—"Oh! and where's the guard?"

Dirty Militiaman.—"The guard? Begor, they're kicking football too."

Field Officer.—"Oh! Where's the sergeant of the guard?"

Dirty Militiaman.—"The sargint? Divil a know I knows, unless (as a bright idea strikes him) he's kicking football too."

Field Officer.—"Oh! And who the devil are you?"

Dirty Militiaman.—"Me, is it? Begor! *I'm the prisoner!*"

The unconscious devotion to duty of the prisoner remaining in a deserted guard-room has always struck me as almost as touching as the self-sacrifice of the Roman sentry at Pompeii.

In some garrisons guard duties are exceedingly heavy, in spite of the reduction which has lately been made in the number of sentry posts, and in consequence of the large number of men who are usually not available for guard in consequence of being either at musketry, or attending gymnasium, or going through a course of military training, or employed on the regimental police, as officers' servants, in the officers' or sergeants' mess, in one of the regimental workshops, or in a garrison office, it is no unusual thing for men to find themselves on guard three or even four times every fortnight.

As neither men going on guard nor coming off are available for drill or any instructive work, it is obvious that guard duties, which teach a soldier absolutely nothing useful, actively hinder the military training of the body to which the soldier belongs. I am afraid that it is too much to expect that military guards as at present existing will be entirely abolished, though there is no sound or valid reason why this should not be done, but I think we may

hope that a further considerable reduction will be made in the number both of guards and sentries.

When a soldier who is on the duty roster is not on guard, he will probably be required to attend one or occasionally two parades of about an hour each every day, with the exception of Saturdays, on which day kits and barracks are usually inspected by the commanding officer and on which day the early hours are usually devoted to scrubbing floors and tables, blackleading grates and coal boxes, and touching up iron-work with Brunswick black or such other composition as is approved in the regiment to which the soldier belongs. The parades which the soldier has to attend are usually so weak, owing to the causes already briefly referred to, that as a rule nothing is attempted beyond a few stereotyped movements in close order drill, through which the soldier absent-mindedly shuffles, mechanically executing the required movements, his thoughts far away from the dusty parade ground.

Those hours of the morning which the soldier does not spend on parade he usually occupies in fatigue, sweeping up the flotsam and jetsam of a barracks, scrubbing the floors of the officers' or sergeants' mess, cleaning out the canteen or recreation room, or cleaning roads or paths about the barracks from the encroaching grass. Neither the parades, the guards, nor the fatigues which occupy his time do anything whatever to improve his military efficiency, yet in this dreary routine the soldier spends considerably more than half of every year which he passes within the United Kingdom.

But there are two breaks in the daily life of a

soldier to which I must next refer. One is the annual course of musketry, the other is the annual course of field training. I can see you, reader, pricking up your ears at this, and I can imagine you saying to yourself, "At last, we shall get at something really practical and useful." Well, it will not be my fault if you are disappointed. Over and over again has it been reiterated that it is of the most vital importance that everything possible should be done to make the soldier a master of his weapon, which in the case of the infantry soldier is the rifle. We have already seen the manner in which the recruit is initiated in the art of rifle shooting; we shall now see how the soldier is annually exercised with a view to his increased efficiency.

Instead of describing in elaborate detail the musketry course of the infantry soldier, I may be forgiven if I interpolate a few remarks on recent developments in military rifle shooting. It is a curious fact, and a strange commentary on the manner in which we proceed to train our soldiers, that as, with every improvement in small arms, it has become yearly more and more necessary to increase the intervals separating one soldier in the line of battle from his comrade, we have at the same time devoted more and more attention to training our troops to deliver their fire in volleys by word of command, regardless of the very obvious consideration that volley firing can only be properly regulated and controlled when the troops firing are in close order.

This has gone so far that to-day, when, as we have learnt in the Boer war, it has become necessary to extend attacking troops to an interval of from six

to ten paces, in order to render it at all possible for them to creep in within effective range of an enemy, we have increased the amount of ammunition which the soldier fires in sectional or collective practices to 77 rounds, and reduced the number fired in individual practices to 42 rounds, while 40 rounds may be fired in any practices deemed advisable by the captain of the company, and 41 are expended at the discretion of the officer commanding the battalion. Only a small proportion of the rounds which may be fired at the discretion of the captain are permitted to be used in previous practice, and some of the rounds of which the colonel can dispose *must* be fired in collective practices, so it is easy to see that the opportunity allowed the individual soldier of improving his shooting is exceedingly limited.

Moreover, only half the prize money which is annually given to stimulate the desire of the men to improve their shooting may be given for individual practices, all of which taken together indicate the anxiety of the authorities to induce the troops to pay greater attention to sectional practices and less to that individual firing which, as all recent experience shows, must certainly decide the battle of the future.

Besides the 200 rounds per man which are thus provided, each battalion is permitted to draw 400 rounds a year to be expended in field firing, the name which is given to a practice of the attack under so-called realistic conditions. How farcical these conditions are may be gathered from the ridiculously small amount of ammunition placed at the disposal of the troops for this important exercise. On service every man will go into action with

150 rounds in his pouch; in time of peace 400 rounds are allotted to a battalion of 800 men! Could anything be more ridiculous?

Under ordinary circumstances the annual course of musketry is over in from ten days to a fortnight, the exact time depending on the weather and on other local conditions. When the soldier has fired his last shot in this course, he is marched back to barracks, and, nine times out of ten, does not fire another shot till the following year. Theoretically the man is supposed to fire his sectional practices, if possible, at some different time of the year, in order, as the authorities sarcastically express it, to keep him in practice during the year, as if the firing of some seven or fourteen rounds in sectional practices on a couple of days within a month or two of the termination of his regular course could appreciably improve his shooting.

It is not too much to say that from beginning to end the whole system of musketry training in the British army is absolutely unsuited to present day requirements.

I have heard it said that with every improvement in firearms it has become of less and less importance to make soldiers good shots individually, the theory of those who preach this doctrine being that it is possible to beat so large an extent of ground with so formidable a volume of practically unaimed fire, that every body of troops armed with modern magazine rifles will be able to surround itself by a zone of fire through which no living thing can pass.

Even assuming that this is true, though I very much doubt it, it is obvious that the maintenance of

such a fire must entail a perfectly enormous expenditure of ammunition, an expenditure out of all proportion to the results which would be obtained, and, hence, even if practicable for troops on the defensive, would be quite impracticable for troops advancing to the attack. In the late war we have had many examples of the practical impossibility of keeping troops supplied with ammunition while under fire.

Surely if the war has taught us anything, it has taught us that it is of the utmost importance to get the best possible results out of every round which is fired, and I do not see how this can be better done than by making every soldier as expert in the use of his weapons as it is possible to make him. Educate the individual soldier as far as possible; teach him to be an accurate judge of distance, give him a rifle which in length and bend of stock is adapted to him individually, instruct him in the art of concealing himself from view, and show him how to make use of inequalities in the ground to obtain a rest for his rifle; having taught him these lessons, give him an ample supply of practice ammunition; encourage him to visit the rifle range two or three times a week (which cannot be done till numerous additional ranges are provided), reduce the number of close order drills to a minimum, cut down the number of guards, keep him fit and in marching condition all the year round, and you will have an army, possibly not so "smart," not so spick and span as the British army of to-day, but which will be an infinitely more formidable weapon in war. Is it too much to hope that the common sense of the nation will at last assert itself, and that

we shall get rid of all the frippery and antiquated rubbish which now clogs the working of the military machine maintained at such enormous cost by the British Empire?

When the soldier has finished his musketry he may find himself under orders to go through the annual course of field training with his company.

This course ought to be second only to musketry in its importance and in its influence on the training of the soldier. In it he is supposed to be instructed in the methods in which positions are attacked and defended, in the manner in which marching armies are covered and protected by advanced, flank, and rear guards; and in which an army halted is guarded by outposts. He is also instructed in the various duties which will fall to his lot in camp, the method of pitching tents, of packing waggons, of loading pack animals, of cooking in the field. He is also shown how streams and ravines may be crossed by temporary bridges, how to knot and splice, how to lash spars together; he is told what a pontoon is; how to find a ford, etc.

Nor is this all: he is also shown how houses and other buildings may be prepared for defence, how walls are loopholed, how ground should be cleared of anything likely to afford cover to an enemy, how shelter trenches, breastworks, and rifle pits are constructed, and how the approach of an enemy may be delayed by wire entanglements, *abbattis*, *chevaux de frises*, or other obstacles.

On the whole a most useful and practical course, especially useful inasmuch as the young soldier is personally instructed by his captain, the officer under

whose eye he would have to carry out his various duties on active service. The civilian reader who has had the patience to follow me thus far, will at last be satisfied that a certain amount of really practical instruction is given to the soldiers of the British army, though I fear that his satisfaction will hardly survive the shock of learning that the whole of the instruction in these multifarious and important duties has to be compressed into the short space of twenty working days, on each of which only from four to five hours are actually employed in work.

Why, this is even more ridiculous than the course of musketry! In his musketry course the soldier is, at least, allowed 200 rounds, and is given some ten or fourteen days to fire them in, but in his military training course we try to teach the private soldier the whole art of war in a short twenty days. And if we examine the reasons which lead to this very useful course being cut so short, we shall find it in the imagined necessity to keep the guards and fatigue duties going, our military rulers being apparently under the impression that these, in reality, constitute the whole duty of a soldier, the musketry and military training being merely a sort of concession to that educated outside opinion, which demands that some effort should be made in time of peace to prepare a soldier for war.

In alluding to the guards and fatigues as being permitted to take up far too much of the soldier's time, I omitted all mention of those terrible drawbacks to the military efficiency of our army known as garrison and regimental employ.

An average line battalion at home is simply "gutted" by the enormous number of men employed

on duties which are in no sense military. I will take them in their order, so far as I can at the moment recall them to my memory, but I fear that I shall omit many; however, my list will be enough to give my readers some idea of the manner in which a regiment is drained of its best men and thus debarred from practising military exercises as they ought to be practised.

In the first place there are usually, at least, some thirty men continually employed as officers' servants, grooms, and mess waiters; servants are supposed to attend certain parades, but as a rule they are rarely present in the ranks except at inspections, when they are apt to "give the show away," and on field days when the battalion parades "as strong as possible." Of course they go through the musketry and field training courses with their squadrons or companies; though I have even known cases where means were found of letting them off all except the actual practice at the targets.

Then other men are permanently employed as cooks and waiters in the sergeants' mess, as company cooks and assistant cooks, as canteen and coffee shop waiters, as regimental police, as tailors, shoemakers, and assistant armourers, in charge of the women's wash-house, in the quartermaster's stores, in the pioneer's shop, in charge of the barrack fire engine, as commanding officer's orderly, and very possibly in charge of the regimental cricket ground. All these are fairly snug billets, and are neither obtained nor retained without a certain amount of competition. They are valued by the soldier not only because many of them carry extra pay and get him off most of

the parades, but because they free him from guards and enable him, as he expresses it, to have "all his nights in bed." They are also valued because they enable a soldier to wear old uniform continually and so to nurse his latest issue with a view to putting in a claim for compensation for clothing when his next issue of clothing becomes due. He is also more or less free from the interference of the non-commissioned officers of his company, and, within certain well understood limits, is consequently able to go about pretty much as he likes, and to be in great measure his own master. All the above employments come under the head of "regimental employ," and naturally account for a very large number of steady and well-conducted men, but in addition, in a garrison town, a considerable number more are required for what is known as "garrison employ."

Under this head come the men employed as servants and grooms to staff officers in the garrison, as orderlies or clerks in the different offices, as hospital orderlies, as orderlies to the general officer commanding, in charge of the recreation ground, in the garrison library, in the provost prison or cells, or as assistants to the garrison military police. It is by no means an uncommon thing for garrison and regimental employ together to account for over two hundred men, or twenty-five per cent. of the strength of an average battalion at home on the higher establishment. All the above are relieved from their special duties to go through musketry and military training with their squadrons and companies, and some of them are caught for a few

parades in the year, but they are practically employed in purely civilian duties, and no attempt whatever is made to keep them in a state of real efficiency as soldiers.

What is the remedy for this state of things? It is sufficiently obvious, but as it would entail certain expenditure, I am very much afraid that it will be a long time before its necessity will be admitted by the authorities.

We have all heard of the increasing difficulty of finding regular and suitable employment for our reservists. Many people go so far as to say, and I firmly believe rightly, that if we could only guarantee suitable employment to all soldiers on their transfer to the reserve, or on their discharge from the army, we should go a great way to solve the recruiting problem. Now one of the chief difficulties in the way of finding employment for old soldiers is that, as a rule, they are without any handicrafts or accomplishments likely to command a price in civil life. Men of superior education or attainments find little difficulty in getting suitable employment, but such is not the case with the vast majority who are content to join the army of casual unskilled labourers, living more or less from hand to mouth till too old or feeble to work any longer.

The number of these men going about the country in search of work does a great deal to counteract the arguments of the most skilful recruiting sergeant; therefore I cannot but believe that it would well repay us to spend a certain amount of money to diminish the number of ex-soldiers who are continually in search of work.

This could easily be done by quartering a certain number of reservists, men without trades but of good character, in every garrison town for the sole purpose of carrying out the duties now executed by soldiers on full pay, duties which I have already indicated under the headings of regimental and garrison employ. These reservists already draw 6d. a day reserve pay; the addition of another 6d. to their pay, coupled with the provision of rations and quarters for themselves, and if married for their families, and the provision of a suitable uniform, would be a bait sufficiently attractive to ensure an ample supply of the best class of men for the work required of them. In the case of officers' servants alone would I make a distinction. These men should invariably belong to the same territorial regiment as their masters, so that in case of mobilisation for war, they would be ready to accompany their masters into the field. Hence the men employed as officers' servants, and these men alone, would accompany their corps in all its changes of station during its home service, only leaving when their period of reserve service was up, by which time in most cases they would be well qualified to fill the position of valets in civil life.

With all these sources of waste done away with, commanding officers would be able to get hold of their regiments whenever they wanted them, and a good officer would quickly be in a position to greatly increase the military value of the troops under his command.

CHAPTER IX

IN my last chapter, rather a long one I fear, I endeavoured to throw some light on the ordinary barrack life of the soldier, but I omitted all reference to the manner in which he is prepared for war by exercise on field days or on manœuvres.

To take field days so-called—in the first place, I am afraid that at a great many stations field days are conspicious by their absence, for the simple reason that there is no suitable ground in the neighbourhood on which the proprietors will permit troops to be exercised, or for the reason that no forces of the three arms are available for instruction. Of course very interesting and instructive field days can be arranged for infantry or cavalry alone, but this requires some little ingenuity, and, where ground is not readily available, it is usual for the authorities to acquiesce in the fact that local circumstances forbid field days.

But at Aldershot and at Salisbury Plain, at the Curragh, and at one or two other places in the United Kingdom, ground for manœuvring troops over is available in the neighbourhood of barracks, and at these places the troops are usually exercised as opposing forces once or twice a week during the summer months. Later on I shall

deal with the instruction afforded by these field days to the officers, at present I am only concerned with the point of view of the private soldier. I am very much afraid that Tommy Atkins does not regard field days as a means of obtaining instruction in his profession. He looks upon them rather as a "—— nuisance," as something which has to be gone through with, and as something which both injures his clothing, wears out his boots, and dirties his equipment and his arms. He rarely has the foggiest notion of the object of the whole proceedings from beginning to end, which is not surprising as it is exceedingly rare for any one to take the smallest trouble to explain the general or special idea governing the day's operations to him, and having loosed off, or preferably lost—for that obviates the necesssity for cleaning his rifle—the meagre allowance of ammunition issued to him, he manages to get through the day with the minimum of exertion, his chief concern being a fear that the "cease fire" may not sound till after his dinner hour.

As a rule he has no cause for anxiety, for his officers are just as keen to get home to lunch in good time, as he is to get back to dinner, but he is always dimly uneasy that "some new game may be on," and his mind is not at rest till the shrill notes of the "cease fire" echo from hill to hill and orders are passed that the troops are to march home. No, I fear that "field days" as at present carried out do the private soldier very little good, and what is more, I fear that under any conceivable system of training the lower ranks would obtain but little useful instruction from sham battles and even from

manœuvres, unless carried out in a very realistic manner; but these operations are necessary for the training of the higher ranks of the army, and, if they only give the men a certain amount of exercise, and educate them in the manner in which inequalities of ground can be utilised to conceal troops, they cannot but be of some little assistance. A morning or a day spent on a field day is better spent than one which has been put in loafing on a form outside a brigade office waiting for letters to be taken to the post.

On the whole, then, the private soldier learns little from the best arranged field days, and less than nothing from the stereotyped sham fights at Aldershot, where he and every one else on both sides is familiar with every inch of the ground, and where those surprises which play so important a part in war, and which can only be guarded against by intelligent reconnoitring, are necessarily conspicuous by their absence.

On manœuvres, so far as the private soldier and the junior non-commissioned officers are concerned, things are little better. The soldier is marched to and fro, up hill and down again, through wet and fine; he is told to extend and to attack, to advance or to retire, he is told to fire, and does so till his scanty stock of ammunition is exhausted, but little or no trouble is taken to explain to him the why and wherefore of all these operations, and he is probably as much in the dark in the end as he was at the beginning as to what the opposing leaders were striving for, and as to whether they succeeded in gaining their ends or not.

After all, this is very much what happens in war, where the private soldier, the pawn in the struggle, knows little or nothing of the course of the campaign, or the result of the operations in which he is engaged, forming an opinion as to the general result by the hardships and sufferings which he is called upon to endure, and by the regularity or otherwise with which he is fed.

On manœuvres the private soldier is more impressed by the immediate effects upon his boots and clothing than by the results of the actions in which he has taken part. He painfully realises that a succession of wet days means "stoppages" for a new kersey and for new boots, and he pockets with a sardonic smile the miserable sum which a generous Government awards him as compensation for damaged clothing. It is, I fear, impossible to educate the private soldier to a comprehension of the strategy and tactics of modern war, though many men do already take an intelligent interest in such things and are able to express very shrewd opinions on the merits of rival commanders, but it is not a hopeless task to endeavour to make the private soldier a competent scout, an expert shot, and a tireless marcher, none of which things he is made by the system of training at present in vogue.

To the marching training of the soldier I have as yet made but little reference, but some description of it must be inserted before bringing this chapter to a close. The marching training of the recruit I have already alluded to; that of the soldier takes place almost entirely during the winter months, during

which he is exercised on an average twice a week in marching from ten to fourteen miles along the roads in the neighbourhood of his barracks, dressed in complete marching order, his valise packed with what is known as a "field kit," and a hunk of bread and cheese in his haversack, though this latter is frequently dispensed with in the case of short marches.

Occasionally, an attempt is made to vary the monotony of the proceedings by combining with the march some simple tactical exercise, but, as I have already explained in reference to field days, these are somewhat over Tommy Atkins' head, as a rule, and he consequently prefers the steady march out and in to being, as he terms it, "kept messing about" for a considerable part of the day. The marching certainly does him good, in spite of which I fear it is not particularly popular, but unfortunately it is discontinued with the arrival of the spring, and the soldier is allowed to relapse into comparative softness till called out for manœuvres in the autumn.

It would be a good thing if a ten mile march formed part of the soldier's weekly work throughout the year, but it is to be hoped that immediate steps will be taken to discover a practicable and sensible service equipment for the soldier, as the pattern at present in use, though possibly an improvement on the old pattern, has several very serious defects. In the first place, an attempt is made to carry far too much. It is a mistake to expect the soldier to carry on service a packed valise; it ought to be quite sufficient to give him a roomy brown canvas haversack, in which he could carry a change of socks, a pair of canvas shoes, a knife, fork, and spoon, and possibly a flannel shirt.

With these articles carried on his person, added to a waterproof sheet and a couple of army blankets rolled and carried on his back, in lieu of the present heavy greatcoat, the soldier would be well equipped for enduring the hardships inseparable from active service. The greatcoat is of no use at all on service. It is clumsy and heavy, and has little warmth compared with a blanket. If two blankets be issued to each man, I would advise one of them being converted into a sort of poncho, so that a soldier could not only use it as a blanket but could also, on emergency, such as on night outpost duty, use it in place of a greatcoat. In the present equipment the coat has to be carried rolled up into a tight cylinder on the back; the mere rolling up of a coat into the prescribed shape is a task which requires two men and much time, not to mention considerable skill; moreover, it is exceedingly injurious to the coat, the last consideration which occurred to the wiseacres who invented it.

Moreover, the present equipment is very difficult to fit, and, owing to the liability of the buff straps of which it is made to stretch, requires refitting from time to time, which is a serious military disadvantage. Finally, it is neither easily put on nor rapidly removable; in short, it is far inferior in every practical quality to every other pattern of military equipment in use in Europe. It is self-condemned, and should be abolished at once. It is high time that we realised, as I trust we are beginning to realise, the enormous importance of mobility in an army. To ensure this mobility we must train our soldiers to march for long periods at a fair speed; such training

cannot be given so long as the present marching order equipment forms an essential part of the equipment of our infantry. It is impossible to take too much trouble to ensure that our infantry shall have good and well-fitted boots and socks, and a serviceable and easily-carried equipment. The pouches at present in use are bad; they neither hold as much ammunition as the soldier needs, nor do they keep securely the ammunition which is put into them. It is, I think, possible that our experience in this war may lead us to substitute a bandolier for the pouch, but almost any arrangement would be preferable to that now in use.

CHAPTER X

THIS is going to be a very short chapter, as in it I propose to briefly sketch the manner in which our cavalry soldiers are trained for the very important work which falls to their share in war, concluding the chapter with a short account of the training received by soldiers serving in the horse and field batteries of the Royal Artillery.

An efficient cavalry soldier ought to be, in the first place, a good horseman, by which is implied not only the power of sticking on his horse under ordinary circumstances, but also the ability to take care of him under all conditions of service in the field, and a knowledge of the simple and more ordinary ailments of the horse, with the manner in which they ought to be treated. So far as actual riding is concerned, I think that our troopers compare favourably with the soldiers of any cavalry in Europe, being instructed on scientific lines, and having, as a rule, somewhat more natural aptitude for horsemanship than is possessed by the average French or German recruit. But in everything to do with horses, apart from the actual riding, our cavalry soldier is extremely ignorant, an ignorance which is chiefly due to the little attention which is paid in our service to the very important science

which may be comprehensively described in the one word "horse-mastership."

Our cavalry soldiers, like our cavalry officers, are very bad horse-masters, as we have lately seen proved to our cost in the war with the Boers, where the waste of horse flesh has been throughout very much greater than it would have been had our soldiers been properly educated in the management of horses in the field. It is a significant fact that the waste of horses among the yeomanry, and especially among the mounted Colonial contingents, the men of whom had been, as a rule, accustomed to the management of horses from their youth, was very much less than in the cavalry regiments of the regular army, which may have been to some extent due to our cavalry horses being very much overweighted, but which was undeniably chiefly owing to the fact that our men, through their ignorance and carelessness, neglected to take proper care of the animals in their charge. Lord Roberts himself found it necessary to issue a very strong memorandum on the subject, a memorandum which was called forth by the enormous number of casualties among our horses, and also by the manner in which he had himself witnessed horses being systematically ill-treated. By this I do not mean that there was any active cruelty or any intentional neglect, for such I am convinced was not the case, but merely that through thoughtlessness and ignorance the men did not give their horses fair play. Consequently, we must see that much more attention is in future directed to the art of keeping horses in health when required to do very hard work under service conditions.

Next in importance to riding comes, I imagine, in the case of a cavalry soldier, scouting, and I may as well say here, once and for all, that hitherto the cavalry soldier in our service has practically not been taught scouting at all. Theoretically, he has been instructed in reconnaissance, but practically the stern test of war has proved that as a scout he was dangerously inefficient, from no fault of his own, but chiefly because in our service the art of scouting has become practically lost, and because our cavalry officers, with a few exceptions, were unable to teach their men an art which they had never been taught themselves.

In our service we have lost sight of the vital importance of keeping the scout hidden from the view of the enemy into whose movements or dispositions he is endeavouring to pry. It has never, apparently, struck us that the scout who was sent out with a large and glittering helmet of polished brass or white metal upon his head was considerably handicapped at the start. Hitherto, in the place of wisely dressing our cavalry in the least conspicuous and striking uniform possible, for a working dress at least, we have endeavoured to clothe them in the most showy uniforms imaginable. What with glittering helmets, shining mess-tins, bright scabbards, metal ornaments —all burnished—on shoulder belt, headstall and saddlery, we have made our troopers so conspicuous that one of them could not move on a sunny day within a couple of miles of an observer without at once attracting notice.

Not content with the old uniforms, which were showy enough, we have lately added to the conspicuous nature of a cavalry-man's dress by giving him

steel chain shoulder pieces, which look very smart and picturesque, but which should certainly be covered with cloth of the same colour as the coat before going on service. Not only is the dress of our troopers conspicuous to the eye, but it is also so contrived as to make the movements of its wearer easily heard, a disadvantage which might have almost equally serious results. On a quiet night a trooper trotting down a grassy lane can be heard jingling along several hundred yards off.

Some of my readers may have read Lord Robert's book, *Forty - One Years in India*, and may remember how Lord Roberts, when a youngster serving as deputy-assistant quarter-master general in the army which, under Sir Colin Campbell, relieved Lucknow, found it necessary to ride back by night from the British Camp to the Dilkusha to order up ammunition. The enemy were in the neighbourhood, and it was necessary for him to be accompanied by a mounted escort. An escort of the 9th Lancers was pressed upon him, but the cautious and shrewd young soldier preferred an escort of native cavalry, owing to the fact that their scabbards being of wood, they would not advertise their movements in the same manner as our English horsemen with their jingling steel scabbards. That was forty-three years ago, but the steel scabbard is still in use in the British cavalry. It is high time it was abolished.

With all these drawbacks it is not remarkable that our cavalry have not won a high reputation for successful scouting in a country so difficult as Natal and the Transvaal, and against a foe so wily as the Boer. Those responsible for the training of

our troops must look to it that these important lessons are not thrown away, and that the cavalry soldier in the future is both clothed, equipped, and trained on common-sense lines. It is also important that the cavalry soldier should be able, on occasion, to shoot. In fact some men of experience in war and of great common sense do not hesitate to say that cavalry, as at present organised, is doomed, and that all mounted troops in the future will be mounted infantry, pure and simple.

This is a subject for argument, and I do not propose to go into the matter here, but it is at anyrate certain that the cavalry soldier should have an effective firearm, and should be able to use it. At present he has a carbine which, though good enough as carbines go, is vastly inferior in range, penetration, and accuracy to the rifle, is not provided with a magazine, and is only some two pounds lighter and some eight inches shorter than the infantry soldier's rifle. Consequently it is not possible to say that the cavalry soldier has a good firearm, nor can I even admit that he is expert in the use of the weapon he has. I fear that it will be found that in most cavalry regiments musketry is gone through in a very perfunctory manner indeed. Neither officers nor men, with few exceptions, take the smallest interest in it, and the miserable 150 rounds, which is the amount annually allotted to each trained cavalry soldier, is fired away with very indifferent results. As it is of great importance that the utmost pains should be taken to improve the shooting of the infantry soldier, so must nothing be left undone which will make our cavalry really

reliable shots, and the first step to be taken with this object in view is to largely increase the allowance of ammunition yearly available for practice. I hardly like to suggest that the carbine should be replaced by the magazine rifle, though I think that the present tendency is decidedly in that direction, but whatever be the weapon of the horse soldier he must be made thoroughly efficient in its use.

As the infantry soldier annually goes through a course of field training, so the cavalry soldier has to undergo "squadron training," but in the cavalry the course is divided into two parts, winter and spring training, each of which consists of a period of eighteen working days. In the winter course, for which, as for the spring course, the whole squadron is united under its own officers, any deficiency in horses being made up by borrowing horses from a squadron going through musketry or able for some other reason to spare some, instruction is given in riding, sword and lance exercises, dismounted duty, outpost duty, duties in camp, including the construction of field kitchens and the picketing of horses in the open, single stick and theoretical instruction, while the spring course is devoted to the drill and manœuvre of the squadron in the field. In the spring course an attempt is made to instruct the men in reconnaissance, in the methods in which the screening duties of cavalry are performed, in the charge and the pursuit, but, as in the infantry, the whole course is vitiated by the very short time in which so much has to be packed. Squadron training at an end, that is to say by the 1st June, the regiment is taken in hand by the colonel, and, in

a large garrison, by the cavalry brigadier, winding up the drill season by taking part in manœuvres The cavalry soldier, partly from his more elevated position in the world, partly from the nature of his duties, is in a better position to follow the proceedings on a field day or on manœuvres than his comrade in the infantry; while the infantry soldier, half choked with dust and streaming with perspiration, is struggling along a lane, possibly between high hedges or high banks, the cavalry soldier, comfortably seated on his horse, is carrying out his duties by scrutinising the movements of the enemy, or else jogging along on escort behind one of the commanders of the opposing forces. During the field day his is the better part, but the infantry soldier scores on returning to barracks, for, whereas he has nothing to do but to discuss the day's operations in the canteen, the cleaning of his arms having been quickly accomplished, and the pipeclaying of his accoutrements probably deferred to a more convenient season, the cavalry soldier, having snatched a hasty dinner, has to set to work to clean a horse encrusted with dust and sweat, after which he has to get the whole of his saddlery cleaned to the satisfaction of his officer.

Taking the conditions of life in the cavalry and infantry on the whole, it can, I think, hardly be denied that the infantry soldier, if his pay is 2d. a day less, has a better time all round, as his work is considerably lighter. As regards the respective value of the military training given to both branches of the service, I think that the defects in the training of the cavalry soldier are more serious than those in the education given to the infantry-man, especially con-

sidering the greater importance of the duty which the cavalry soldier is expected to perform in war. Infantry are undoubtedly the back-bone of an army, but infantry can effect little if not placed where they are required, and no commander can ensure this unless he be well served by his mounted troops, and kept well informed of the dispositions, numbers, and movements of his enemy. Many difficult, dangerous, and responsible duties may fall to the lot of the private of infantry in war, but far greater responsibility may at any moment fall to the lot of the cavalry trooper, consequently no pains should be spared to develop his intelligence to the utmost, and to so fit him to bear his part in the hour of need.

As to the equipment of our cavalry, I imagine that no one is prepared to deny that it is at present far too cumbrous and heavy. Our troop horses are so crushed by the weight of their riders and their equipment, that it is impossible to expect them to travel either far or fast. In fact our cavalry is sadly deficient in mobility, and a cavalry which is wanting in this respect is of very little use for campaigning. Of late there has been a good deal of discussion on the subject of the excessive weights carried by cavalry horses, consequently my readers will not be surprised to read that the average hussar—light cavalry—in complete service order, rides little under nineteen stone, while the troopers of our Household Cavalry and heavy dragoon regiments ride considerably over twenty stone on the average.

There are several methods in which this excessive weight, a weight which soon effectually kills the troop horse, may be reduced. In the first

place we must endeavour to enlist smaller and lighter men for our cavalry—for the light cavalry regiments in particular. Military authorities fear that any reduction in the weight of the rider may lessen the value of cavalry for shock tactics in an encounter with the mounted troops of an enemy, but, without considering the possibility that shock tactics may be altogether out of date, it is worth while pointing out that the effect of a charge depends in the first place on the compact formation of the charging body, and secondly on its momentum. That is to say, if two bodies of cavalry meet each other at the charge, the victors will in all probability be the force which succeeds in charging "knee to knee," and should both succeed in doing this, then victory will rest with the body which has the greatest momentum. Now momentum is the product of the weight of a moving mass into its velocity; consequently, if you reduce the weight but increase the velocity in the same proportion, the momentum, or product of the two, remains unaffected. If we reduce the weight of our men and also the weight carried by their horses, which latter is the first and most important consideration after all—for dead weight is more distressing to a horse, than the same amount of live weight—we ought thereby to get increased speed out of our horses, and the momentum of the charge will be as great as before. Therefore I believe that this argument against enlisting very light men for service in our cavalry falls through, and, personally, I would enlist as light men as could be got, provided they were thoroughly sound and hardy.

But all of us are agreed that the dead weight carried by the horse must be cut down in some manner. On the horse, on active service, the following articles are carried: saddle and bridle, with head rope and wallets packed, breast-plate, breast harness, and pioneer equipment, in the regulated proportion, hoof-picker, nose-bag, small corn sack, forage net, mess-tin, heel-rope, carbine in bucket, sword in frog, shoe case, lance (for lancers and the front rank of dragoon regiments), cape, cloak, field cap, surcingle pad, cape protector. In the wallets, two iron picketing pegs with rings, horse brush and curry comb, horse rubber, sponge, one pair of socks, one flannel shirt, one hold-all complete, towel and soap, spare bootlaces, tin of grease, emergency ration, and a woollen cap. Now, is not this a terrible collection of articles to pile on to one unfortunate horse, especially when we remember that the rider, dressed for field service, weighs well over fourteen stone, presuming his weight, in ordinary clothes, to be about eleven stone. Why, the horse of the White Knight in *Alice* was not more burdened than the unfortunate "hairy" which has to carry Thomas Atkins to the wars. Surely a considerable portion of the equipment above mentioned might be dispensed with, which would enable the saddle to be made a great deal lighter, and thus gain an important advantage in this respect as well.

I have seen several suggestions as to the manner in which the surplus kit of our troopers should be carried. The suggestion which I like the best, but which will never be adopted on account of the expense involved —as if any initial expense would not save money in

the end, if it added largely to the mobility of our cavalry, and enabled them to get more work out of their horses—is that every soldier's kit should be carried on a pack horse, leaving the troop horse to carry nothing but the rider and his weapons. I presume on going into action these horses would be kept under cover, and when performing screening duties, would march in rear of the main body of the regiment.

Another good suggestion, one which has a fair chance of adoption, is that one or more light carts should accompany each squadron, two-wheeled carts for choice, able to travel anywhere the cavalry could go. This would enable the weight carried by the troop horses to be cut down very considerably, as would the third suggestion, to which we may come some day, that light motor cars should accompany all cavalry regiments, drawing carts with the kits of all the men. I don't much care which suggestion is adopted by the authorities, but something must be done to make our cavalry fit to execute the arduous work which falls to their share when campaigning. For one thing I can see no reason why those regiments armed with the lance should carry the sword as well, in addition to the carbine. Two weapons ought to be enough for any man; I can see no reason why any trooper should have to carry three.

I am afraid that this chapter is getting already very much longer than I anticipated, yet I have as yet said nothing at all about our gunners and drivers. In the field artillery the winter is by no means an idle time, though it is the time during which, as in the other

branches of the service, men are permitted in turns to go home on furlough. But those who are with the batteries are kept hard at work, in fact one result of men being on furlough is to increase the work of the remainder, as horses and guns must be kept clean, and the former must be exercised, whether the number of men in charge be many or few. In the winter the drivers are brushed up in their riding and driving, and the gunners are instructed both theoretically in the science of gunnery and practically in drill. This goes on till the first of March, by which time all the furlough men have rejoined, when the batteries of each brigade division—or group of three batteries into which our field batteries are formed for tactical purposes—commence their annual battery training. In the artillery this lasts for fourteen days, and every man in the battery must be present all the time the course is going on, unless prevented by illness. The course consists of instruction in drill on foot, and with the battery horsed, of instruction in duties in camp and on the line of march, in entraining and detraining the battery, and in parading completely mobilised for service and as far as possible on a war footing. When all the batteries in the brigade division have gone through this course they are drilled together and practised in ammunition supply and other duties in the field by the commander of the brigade division, and kept busily employed in this manner till the time comes for the batteries to be exercised at target practice. There are only five artillery ranges in the United Kingdom, and the amount of ammunition to be expended varied from 200 to 400 rounds per battery, according to the range to which it may be sent

and to other circumstances, but though the amount of ammunition is necessarily limited, for constant firing would speedily wear out the guns—and guns are expensive articles—a great deal of really useful work is done, and there is no more efficient arm in the British army than the Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery. We may be quite sure that under our new commander-in-chief, himself a gunner, the efficiency of our gunners will be jealously watched and sedulously maintained.

As for the guns, a great deal of nonsense was talked and written about our field guns in the course of the late war. The field gun is in a transition state, and we were caught by war while the type of gun best suited to our needs was still under discussion. As a matter of fact a year ago none of the Great Powers had definitely decided on the nature of the weapon with which their field artillery should be armed, and when the war broke out the field artillery of our army was the equal of any field gun in the world actually in use in any army. Since then the French have re-armed their artillery with a quick-firing gun, for which a great deal is claimed, and we must now bestir ourselves to find a weapon equally good, or we shall be left behind in the race, and may any day find ourselves in a position of dangerous inferiority. But it must not be assumed that the quick-firing field gun has no grave disadvantages attending its use. Chief of these is the enormous expenditure of ammunition. In the last war our batteries were on many occasions in very awkward predicaments owing to the rapidity with which they had expended their

ammunition and the difficulty of replenishing their supply; with quick-firing guns their difficulties would probably have been very much greater, had they been tempted to make use of the great facilities for rapid firing afforded by the new carriage and mounting. It may not be generally known that, at the time when the Boers finally invested Ladysmith, our field batteries then in the town could have fired away the whole of the ammunition which was in the possession of the British army under Sir George White in less than six hours! Quick-firing guns would not have been much appreciated by the defenders of Ladysmith.

This chapter has already grown to inordinate length, so I will here bring it to a close, reserving to a future chapter some account of the financial prospects of Tommy Atkins, and of Mrs Tommy Atkins, as his days in the army increase in number.

CHAPTER XI

I HAVE already stated that the infantry recruit, on joining, receives pay at the rate of 1s. a day, from which is deducted 3d. daily to pay for his "messing," in addition to the stoppages for washing and hair-cutting, library subscription, etc., the total stoppages not being permitted to exceed 5½d. a day, and, as a rule, rarely exceeding 4½d. When, however, the young soldier, who has enlisted for seven years with the colours, attains the age of nineteen, if he is otherwise qualified as an efficient soldier, he is given his messing free, so his pecuniary position is at once benefitted to the extent of 3d. a day. Consequently, striking an average, and allowing for such incidental charges as tailors' and shoemakers' bills (for repairs only), barrack damages, etc., the well-conducted soldier can rely on drawing about 6s. a week from one year's end to another, out of which he will have to meet no expenses except those for his amusements, and for his supper nightly at the regimental coffee shop, which, as I have already said, ought in no case to cost more than 2d. per day. So long as a man is careful and economical he ought not only to be able to keep himself supplied with beer and tobacco to a reasonable extent, but ought also to be able to put by a shilling or two a week towards the furlough which he hopes to obtain in the winter.

In fact a large number of thrifty men do manage to save an astonishing amount from their pay.

After two years' service the soldier, provided that he has committed no offence entailing an entry in the regimental defaulter book, that is to say no offence which has been punished by deprivation of pay, by imprisonment, or by confinement to barracks exceeding seven days, becomes entitled to his first "Good Conduct Badge," a chevron which is worn on the left arm just above the cuff, and which entitles the wearer to extra pay at the rate of a penny a day for each badge so earned. At the end of six years' good service the soldier becomes entitled to a second badge, at the end of twelve to a third, and after eighteen years' good service to a fourth. If promoted to corporal, however, or, in the artillery, to bombardier, he is ineligible for good conduct badges, which is a reward practically reserved for well-conducted private soldiers.

There are, moreover, other legitimate means by which the private soldier may increase his income. As a mess waiter, as an officer's servant or groom, he will be kept in plain clothes or livery, thus saving his uniform and enabling him to draw compensation for articles not required, and he will probably receive in cash from 10s. to 16s. a month. Though the soldier who undertakes work of this description has his time, as a rule, more fully occupied than that of his comrades in the barrack-room, and is more often obliged to spend his evenings in barracks, either waiting in the mess or in attendance on his master, he has many advantages in being excused from guards and fatigues, and in being able to escape all but the minimum of parades and field

days. Consequently, in most corps these billets are greatly sought after, and the servant of the commanding officer or of one of the senior field officers is a person of no small importance in the barrack-room.

Skilled workmen can also earn good wages in the carpenters', shoemakers', or tailors' shop, all of which are run under the supervision of the quartermaster, who is often at his wits' end to find men capable of doing the work which at certain seasons of the year accumulates so quickly. Occasionally, also, troops are employed on work which carries with it working pay of as much as 1s. a day, work such as assisting the engineers in the construction of rifle ranges, in the repair of sea walls, or other labour of a similar nature. Needless to say, there is never the slightest difficulty in getting volunteers for work of this sort; indeed, quite apart from the question of pay, Tommy is usually only too ready to go in for anything which will offer some variety from the deadly monotony of the daily round of guards, parades, and fatigues.

So long, then, as Tommy is a bachelor, his existence will compare very favourably with that of the working man in the large majority of civilian occupations. He is well lodged, well fed, well clothed. He is not by any means hard worked, in fact, I think he would probably be happier if given more work—of an interesting nature—to occupy his time, and he has at his disposal a fine club with its library, its billiard tables, most of the daily and weekly newspapers, and a refreshment department where everything is of the cheapest and of excellent quality. Should he fall sick, he is cared for free of cost (though on this subject I shall have something to say),

in a well-appointed hospital, and if he wants to go home and see his friends, he is allowed to have a month's leave in the year on full pay for the purpose of doing so.

In most regiments all soldiers in possession of a good conduct badge are given "standing passes," which permits them to remain out of barracks till midnight every night of the week—if not on duty—consequently the restrictions to which he is subjected cannot be looked upon as unduly severe; less severe, in fact, than those imposed on civilian workmen in many highly organised branches of labour. The soldier has to obey the orders of his superior, so have all of us, in whatever capacity we may be serving, but the soldier has the great advantage that his immediate superiors are themselves under supervision, and that any abuse of their authority will be promptly punished as soon as detected. Consequently, as I have said, so long as Tommy is a bachelor, his lot is one rather to be envied than otherwise.

But before referring to Tommy's prospects as a married man, I must touch for a moment on the question of hospital stoppages, which is a somewhat sore point in the barrack-room. The men will argue that they are informed before enlistment that they will receive free medical treatment, yet they complain that as soon as they are admitted to hospital they are placed under stoppages to the extent of either 4d. or 6d. per day, according to whether they are treated in a "dieted" or "non-dieted" hospital, and also lose their messing allowance of 3d. per day. Of course, as they have no

messing to pay for, this is no great hardship, but in Tommy's eyes it is magnified into a breach of faith, and he feels that when he is so unfortunate as to get sick, he deserves more consideration from the authorities than he receives. Where men have to go to hospital in direct consequence of injuries received while engaged in military operations, the general officer in command may remit either the half or the whole of the stoppage, according to circumstances, but this concession does not satisfy the men, who are very strongly of opinion that hospital stoppages of any kind are iniquitous, and are a distinct breach of the understanding on which they enlisted, that all medical treatment would be free. Of course, the hospital stoppage does no more than pay for the improved messing which the patient receives, but the soldier argues that if he is given free messing when well, he ought—*à fortiori*—to be messed free when he is ill.

There is something in this, but, of course, the authorities are averse to the abolishing of the hospital stoppage, chiefly for the reason that they fear that its abolition would give encouragement to the malingerer, and that men are less likely to pose, without sufficient cause, as interesting invalids if they actually lose money by doing so. This is quite sound, but I must confess that I think that at the present time, when the recruiting difficulty is assuming very serious proportions, the authorities would do well to do away with hospital stoppages once and for all, trusting to the skill of their medical officers to detect the majority of attempts at malingering.

Turning now to the matrimonial prospects of the soldier, we find that the military authorities sternly discountenance matrimony in the army, only 3 per cent. of an infantry battalion being admitted to the married establishment, and 4 per cent. of a cavalry regiment of battery or artillery. I must confess that I am quite unable to understand why marriage should be less discouraged in the cavalry and artillery than in the infantry, but so it is. But even when a vacancy occurs on the married establishment a soldier has to satisfy certain requirements before he can obtain his commanding officer's consent to his marriage. In the first place he must convince his commanding officer that his bride elect is a young woman of reputable character; he must have not less than seven years' service and two good conduct badges, and must produce proof that he has five pounds either in the Post Office or in the regimental savings bank. These requirements fulfilled, he will, provided there is a vacancy in the married establishment, receive permission to marry, and his wife will at once become an integral factor of the regiment. He will be given either quarters, or lodging allowance to enable him to find lodgings outside, and, when the battalion moves, his wife and family will be moved at the public expense to the new station of his corps. Medical attendance will also be provided free for both his wife and family, and Mrs Tommy will find in barracks a well equipped laundry—the "Women's Wash House"—in which she will be permitted to wash the clothes of a proportion of the men in her husband's com-

pany or squadron, and so earn possibly as much as two or three pounds a month. On the whole the married soldier whose family finds quarters in barracks is by no means badly off. The man can either continue to draw his rations, usually receiving them weekly or bi-weekly, or he may be allowed to draw 6d. per day in lieu, and his messing allowance will also come to him in the form of cash, so, assuming that he has two good conduct badges, his income will at once spring from 1s. 2d. per day to 1s. 11d., though out of this he will have to feed himself and his family.

But if the soldier is unable to find quarters in barracks for himself and his family, his position is less enviable. He will be permitted to draw lodging allowance at the rate of 6d. per day, or 3s. 6d. per week, a sum for which, in the majority of places, he will find it quite impossible to get more than one small room within easy reach of barracks. In a garrison town lodgings near barracks are invariably at a premium, and it is seldom, indeed, that the married soldier is able to house himself decently for less than four or even five shillings a week. In addition to drawing lodging money, the married soldier for whom there is no room in barracks is also given an allowance in lieu of fuel and light, amounting in the summer to 3½d. per day and in the winter to 4½d. Even when coals are at normal prices this allowance is absurdly inadequate, as it must be remembered that coal has to be bought for cooking as well as for warming the soldier's quarters. If the exigencies of military service take the soldier away from his wife and family, the latter become entitled to separation

allowance to cover the cost of having to keep up two establishments, an allowance which varies from 4d. per day for the wife and 1½d. per day for each child if the family are provided with quarters in barracks, to 1s. 1d. for the wife and 2d. for each child if on the lodging list; but if separation allowance is drawn, lodging allowance is no longer admissable.

Reviewing, then, the whole system on which Government treats the married soldiers of the Empire, I think that it is quite clear that the soldier receives very scanty justice at the hands of the authorities. In the first place, the percentage of married men allowed is very much too small. In these days when, especially among the working classes, both men and women marry very young, it is impossible to enforce celibacy in the manner attempted by the Government. If they prevent men from marrying, the result only is that another and infinitely greater evil is encouraged. The subject is far too serious to be treated here, but I cannot continue without warning my readers in the strongest possible manner that the evil to which I refer, and which is chiefly due to the misdirected efforts of the authority to discourage matrimony among our troops, is assuming the most formidable dimensions, and that it is not an exaggeration to say that a number of men equal to a strong brigade of infantry are annually incapacitated owing to this cause alone in India, and that there is the gravest danger that the canker is already beginning to spread with fatal effects among our civilian population. The subject is a serious and terrible one, one which demands the instant and

close attention of the rulers of the Empire, who cannot be held guiltless of contributing by their apathy and carelessness to the dangerous growth of the evil I refer to in recent years.

In spite of the inconvenience and expense which may ensue, it is the duty of the Government to at once revise the present regulations dealing with soldiers' marriages. A much larger percentage of married men must be allowed per battalion or regiment, and the rates of lodging allowance, fuel and light, and separation allowances must be increased so as to enable a soldier to obtain respectable quarters close to barracks without having to make an inroad upon his already scanty pay.

As regards promotion in the army, the prospects of the well-conducted and intelligent soldier are exceedingly good. Within a couple of years or very possibly less of his enlistment, the smart young soldier ought to be able to count on receiving the lance stripe, which at first will bring him no pay but a great deal more work, but which will soon lead to his pay being increased to 1s. 3d. in addition to any good conduct pay to which he may be entitled. Two years more should see him a corporal, drawing 1s. 8d. a day, and by the time the first seven years of his service are up he ought to be a sergeant, earning 2s. 4d. a day, and permitted to use the sergeants' mess. If he wisely prolong his service and continue to deserve the good opinion of his superiors, before he has twelve years' service he has a good chance of being promoted to colour-sergeant, drawing 3s. a day as pay and an extra shilling as company accountant. If he is particularly smart both in his work and in his appearance

he may be promoted to the rank of warrant officer, in which, as a sergeant-major of infantry, he will be entitled to 5s. a day with quarters and rations, and to increased allowances of various kinds.

It is not every man who can hope to reach the rank of sergeant-major, but every soldier ought to be able to count upon being made a sergeant, if ambitious, which will mean that he will be well paid and well treated throughout his service, and when he retires after twenty-one years' service he will be entitled to a pension varying from 2s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. a day, according to the length of time he has served as sergeant—which must not be less than twelve years to earn the higher rate—for the remainder of his life. As a soldier can enlist at eighteen years of age, this means that, as a comparatively young man of thirty-nine, he can return to civil life well able to do many years of good work, with a pension for life of as much as 15s. 9d. a week and a gratuity of £12 sterling in his pocket. There are very few civilian occupations in which a man without the hardest and most constant work can attain so comfortable a position before reaching middle age. I am only surprised that the recruiting offices are not full of young men anxious to enter a profession so honourable in itself, and which offers so many advantages.

The candidate for a commission as an officer is, of course, little likely to be tempted by inducements of this kind, but looks rather to the probability that he will be able to attain the object of his ambition. To him I am afraid I cannot offer much encouragement. To obtain a commission it will be necessary for him to have obtained a first-class certificate of education

—which is also essential for all wishing to attain warrant rank—and to have convinced his commanding officer that he is worthy of advancement before he has attained the age of twenty-six years. Of course he may succeed in doing this; many young fellows have, but the candidate for a commission will find the work very much harder than if he had elected to follow the usual road.

One word of advice I will give on this subject. When selecting the corps in which you will serve your probation in the ranks, be careful to avoid corps in which many gentlemen are already serving —if possible—and do not make the mistake of enlisting, as so many young fellows do, in the cavalry, but choose the quietest and most humdrum infantry battalion which you can find. The reason for this is obvious. If you enlist in a corps with many gentlemen privates already in it, you will find yourself only one of many; it will be much harder for you to bring yourself to the favourable notice of your officers, and in a smart cavalry regiment, where the whole standard of smartness is higher, it will be a much more difficult matter for you to attract attention as a particularly smart and efficient soldier.

But when the object of your ambition is gained and you at last see your name in the gazette as appointed to a second lieutenancy in the regular army, you will find that your prospects of future promotion are exceedingly small, unless in very exceptional circumstances, owing to the fact that you will be several years older than many of your brother officers who are senior to you in rank. On the whole, then, I would say to those who contemplate enlisting with a view to obtaining a commission, "Don't."

CHAPTER XII

IN this chapter I propose to briefly describe the system on which discipline is maintained in the army, and evil-doers are kept in check and are taught the error of their ways. I am convinced that many very eligible recruits are kept out of the army from a misplaced fear of the stringency of military discipline, and the severity of military punishments. Though, as I intend to show, certain offences are visited with undue and absurd severity, yet it will not be at all difficult to prove that, as a rule, the present system of maintaining discipline errs rather on the side of undue leniency, and that the man who honestly tries his best has little to fear.

The first thing which a recruit must bear in mind is, that he must at once do what he is told, never mind who tells him, whether he believes he is being imposed upon or not. He will quickly find that he will derive the greatest possible benefit from earning the reputation of being a willing soldier. There is no one who gets himself so quickly disliked by both officers and non-commissioned officers as the grumbler — barrack-room "grouser" — and the "lawyer." Let him remember that nothing is more foolish than to set himself up in opposition to constituted authority, even though he

may be fairly certain that constituted authority is wrong; let him beware, also, of "nursing his wrath to keep it warm." Let him always be clean, sober, punctual, and attentive to whatever happens to be the subject of instruction at the time, and he will soon find that barrack-room life is neither so rough nor so hard as he may have imagined it.

But supposing that the young soldier gets into bad company, and, forgetting all his good resolutions, begins to butt his foolish head against the hard wall of military law and regulations. In that case, with what penalties are his misdemeanours likely to be visited? These I will now endeavour to explain to you.

Taking the least serious military offences first, we find that the cause which most frequently brings the recruit into conflict with superior authority is the offence of being late or absent for parade or for failing to return to barracks in time for tattoo roll call at 9.30 P.M. On the first and probably also on the second occasion on which a military crime of this nature is committed, the culprit will be let off with a mere verbal reprimand or a caution, but sterner measures will have to be taken if the offence is repeated. In this case the captain of the soldier's company may find it his duty to award a punishment of three or four days C.B., or confinement to barracks, which carries with it punishment drill, and closes the canteen to the culprit except for one hour in the day. His name is placed on the list of "defaulters," he has to answer his name at the guard-room whenever the "defaulters' call" is sounded, has to attend all parades, is not permitted to quit barracks, and has

to do a good deal of fatigue duty in addition to one or two hours' punishment drill. This latter consists of being marched up and down the barrack square for an hour at a time by the provost corporal, dressed in complete marching order, and fully armed.

If this punishment fails to act as a deterrent, further doses of C.B. may be administered, all being duly entered in the soldier's company defaulter sheet, and if the sentence should exceed seven days, in the regimental defaulter sheet as well. The soldier has now received a "regimental entry," which has the effect of depriving him of a good conduct badge, and, if he has not yet received one, of postponing the day on which he will be entitled to do so.

If drunkenness be the weakness of the soldier he will probably be let off with a caution on the first and also on the second occasion on which he offends. Should he, however, break out again within three months of the last offence, which has been duly entered in his company defaulter sheet, he at once incurs a fine of 7s. 6d., entailing a "regimental entry," which is reduced to 5s., and a "company entry," if an interval of upwards of three months and less than six separates the offences, and to 2s. 6d. if over six months and within nine of the last case of drunkenness. If more than nine months elapse, the soldier escapes a fine.

But if he has become an habitual drunkard, and four previous cases within the twelve months are recorded against him, 2s. 6d. will be added to the amount of the above-mentioned fines, which will leave the offender with exceedingly little pocket money to provide himself with beer. There

is, however, one merciful regulation in the army by which, however much a soldier may be in debt, he must always be paid a penny a day; that is to say, the whole of his pay can never be stopped from him, unless, of course, he loses his whole pay by absence or desertion.

The military law dealing with absence is particularly stringent, far too stringent in one respect, in my opinion. A soldier who is absent without leave for a day is, *ipso facto*, deprived of his pay for one day, loses at the same time any badge which he may hold, and incurs a regimental entry. Any period of six consecutive hours, whether wholly in one day or partly in one and partly in another, constitutes a day for the purposes of the regulation. Consequently, a soldier who fails to answer his name at tattoo roll-call, and does not re-enter barracks till 4 o'clock on the following morning, will necessarily incur a regimental entry, with all its serious consequences. There is no alternative. His commanding officer cannot mitigate the punishment in any way, though he may believe that the soldier is a good man and has erred only from thoughtlessness; if the offence of absence be proved, the soldier has to take the consequences. Now I think that no time ought to be lost in cancelling this regulation, which has only been introduced of recent years. It is far too harsh, and is further in fault in not leaving the punishment to the discretion of the prisoner's commanding officer.

For all cases of absence over six hours, the soldier loses his pay, and he may in addition be sentenced by his commanding officer to imprisonment as well

up to a period of twenty-one days, if he has been twenty-one days absent. For other offences the legal power of the commanding officer to award imprisonment up to twenty-one days is restricted by Queen's Regulations to fourteen days. This imprisonment is not carried out in a civil gaol, but in a provost prison under military government. The prisoner is placed on a reduced diet, clothed in prison dress, has his hair cut close to his head, and is employed in picking oakum, in shot drill, and in fatigues within the precincts of the barracks. He loses the whole of his pay for every day he is in prison, or in the guard-room awaiting disposal for an offence for which he is afterwards sentenced to imprisonment.

Non-commissioned officers cannot be awarded any summary punishment by their commanding officer, but in cases which require more punishment than a reprimand, must be tried by court-martial. Above I have briefly indicated the powers of summary punishment which are vested in a commanding officer, though I have refrained from going too deeply into details in order to avoid wearying my readers.

But the soldier may find himself "put back" for trial by a court-martial, or, instead of submitting to the award of his commanding officer, may himself demand to be tried either by a regimental or a district court-martial. A regimental court-martial can only try prisoners below the rank of sergeant, and cannot inflict a heavier punishment than forty-two days' imprisonment with hard labour added to a fine of £1 for drunkenness; in a regimental court-martial the president of the court

may be a captain; there are, in addition, two junior members, who must have at least one year's commissioned service, and, as a rule, though not necessarily, all the members will belong to the same corps as the prisoner. The commanding officer both convenes and confirms the sentence of this court.

A district court-martial is a more important and powerful tribunal. By it can be tried all offenders below the rank of warrant officer, and it can award sentences of imprisonment up to two years, coupled with discharge from the service. The president will usually be a field officer, and he is assisted by two officers of not less than two years' commissioned service. In the case of a district court-martial the members will usually belong to different corps, and the court is convened, and its sentence confirmed, by the general officer commanding the district.

A general court-martial, by which officers of any rank can be tried, is the highest military court. It can award either the death penalty or sentences up to penal servitude for life, and its sentence must be confirmed by Her Majesty herself or by some officer specially authorised by her to confirm the sentences of general courts-martial.

Trial by court-martial is, as a rule, a very simple affair. The case to be tried has usually been carefully investigated previous to trial, and in the majority of cases the prisoner pleads guilty. In all simple cases the court-martial is as good an instrument as any other for getting at the truth, but in complicated or difficult cases I fear that military officers as a rule are suited neither by

their training nor by their temperament to conduct a long and patient investigation. Moreover, the form of procedure of a court-martial is most inconvenient for getting at the truth, especially in cases where it is desirable to sharply cross-examine a shuffling or prevaricating witness. In a court-martial every question put to the witness has to be put through the medium of the president, and has to be taken down in writing before the next question can be put. This obviously gives the witness plenty of time to collect himself and prepare for the next question, and reduces cross-examination to an absurdity. Counsel are permitted to practice before courts-martial, which are open courts, and may at any time, except when the court is closed for deliberation, be attended by any curious members of the public, and in difficult cases it is usual to appoint an officer with some legal training and experience to officiate as Judge Advocate, in order to assist the court by delivering an impartial commentary on the evidence, and by giving his advice on any question of difficulty. All the same the court-martial is not a tribunal at all suited for the investigation of complicated cases, though fortunately such cases very seldom occur in military life.

On active service offenders can be brought before a field-general court-martial, which is competent to award the capital sentence or to inflict such lighter punishment as "field imprisonment," which consists of keeping the offender under guard and tying him daily for certain periods in constrained attitudes, which sounds unpleasant.

CHAPTER XIII

LIKE the last chapter this will be a short one. In it I propose to describe briefly the manner in which a soldier's accounts are kept, and to give the civilian a little insight into the nature of the clerical work which vexes the soul of both officer and non-commissioned officer in the British army. Of late we have talked a good deal about "red tape," most of us having a very vague idea of what it implies; in this chapter I hope to show, though only to a small extent, the manner in which red tape fetters the soldier from the commencement of his career. The number of documents connected with every soldier serving in the British army is prodigious. When he joins his attestation is made out in duplicate, one copy accompanying him, the other, or the original, remaining at the depot and forming a continuous record of his service. The soldier also carries about everywhere with him what is known as his "small book," a little book in a stout flexible cover, in which is entered a statement of his monthly settlement of accounts, vouched by his own signature or that of his officer, according to whether he is in debt or in credit, and containing also his description, a record of all classes of instruction he has attended, of all certificates and medals he has gained,

of any campaigns in which he has served, of his marriage and the birth of his children, and of his next of kin. It also contains forms of will, in case the soldier should wish to make a will, and a good deal of miscellaneous information. Besides this, when the recruit goes to his battalion he takes with him his company defaulter sheet, on which every offence he commits during his service is permanently recorded, his regimental defaulter sheet, reserved for more serious crimes, his court-martial sheet, his free kit issue sheet, showing what articles of kit were issued to him, his medical history sheet, which is a record of all the occasions on which he has been attended by a military medical officer, with a statement of the nature of his complaint and the manner in which it was treated, and a last pay certificate, showing the state of his accounts on transfer.

When he has reached his regiment he is posted to the company whose turn it is to receive recruits, and his name is entered at once in the company pay list and in the pay and mess sheet. In the former is a record of the weekly payments which he receives, always in the presence of an officer, and in the latter is shown the number of days he was in mess, in hospital, in prison, etc., with a statement of the money paid to him. These two should tally. At the end of the month the accounts of each soldier are read over to him, also in the presence of an officer, before whom he affixes his signature opposite to his name in the pay list as a voucher that he admits the correctness of the account. Beside this cash account it is necessary to keep a clothing account for each soldier, showing the annual issues of each article of clothing, and

whether compensation was received or not. In the latter case the money remains to his credit for twelve months, after which it is brought to his credit in the pay list. All these accounts have to be kept by colour-sergeants or squadron quartermaster sergeants under the supervision of the company or squadron commander, and, as may be imagined, take an enormous amount of time and trouble. When the soldier is warned to proceed with a draft to join the foreign battalion of his regiment, all the papers which accompanied him from the depot have to be again made out, and are handed by the adjutant to the officer who is going out in charge of the draft.

Besides all these accounts, the pay-sergeants have to keep a sergeants' cash account, showing payments and disbursements, vouched by signatures, and also the captain's cash account, which ought to be—and frequently is—kept by the captain, showing receipts from the paymaster and payments to the men and to the pay-sergeant. In every company of infantry the following books have to be kept, and must be kept neatly and accurately, and invariably posted up to date: namely, the order book; defaulter book; savings-bank ledger; messing book; pay and mess sheet; pay list; cash book and ledger; personal clothing disposal book; monthly requisitions for clothing and necessaries, and barrack damage account. The amount of work which is entailed in keeping all these books is obvious at a glance, and the evil caused by this accumulation of forms is not lessened by the fact that the non-commissioned officer whose duty it is to keep them is also the senior non-commissioned officer in the company, whose duty it is to attend

all parades with his company, and who is, next to the commissioned officers, responsible for the order and efficiency of the company. I am afraid that my ideas on the subject of soldier's accounts are somewhat revolutionary, but I would take the whole of this work away from company officers and non-commissioned officers, following the system in use in the navy, and would provide a paymaster with a couple of clerks to do the whole of the pay and clerical work in each regiment, leaving to the officers the duty of looking to the military efficiency of their men, and to that alone. Moreover, the number of forms and accounts in use could be greatly simplified without any loss of efficiency.

I am in hopes that some day we may see the pay of the soldier so increased that it will be reasonable to expect him to provide himself with every article of his uniform and necessaries, which he would be able to purchase from a store which should be started in every garrison under the supervision of the army clothing department. Pimlico, in fact, would deal direct with the individual soldier, and the keeping of accounts would be simplified by requiring the soldier to pay cash for all his requirements. Moreover, the public would benefit from the fact that it would no longer be necessary for regiments changing station to carry about with them chests of new or part worn clothing and bales of necessaries. Correspondence would be minimised, the soldier would be treated like a reasonable being, capable of managing his own private affairs, and officers would be left free to devote themselves to improving the military efficiency of their men. Difficulties might arise at first from

men selling their kits and spending all their pay as soon as received, but this sort of thing could easily be met by issuing to the culprit an order for clothing instead of pay and sending him under the escort of a corporal to the store to get what he required. The regimental paymasters might be made accountants in direct correspondence with the War Office, and the present system of station and district paymasters might be abolished, to the great benefit of the service.

We must bring ourselves to treat soldiers as intelligent and sensible men, and must abandon the old system of treating them like children. We must endeavour in every way to give them self-confidence and self-reliance, and leave them a free hand to spend their spare time and their spare cash in the way they may select for themselves. The present system of keeping Tommy in leading strings during the whole time he is in the service cannot possibly produce the intelligent and self-confident soldiers which are required by the conditions of modern warfare.

Before saying good-bye to Tommy Atkins and entering the sacred precincts of his officers' mess, I must say a word or two about deferred pay and the system which has taken its place. Most of my readers will be aware that, till recently, deferred pay, at the rate of £3 a year, was earned by each soldier, and was paid to him in a lump sum on his discharge or transfer to the reserve, in order to maintain him till he succeeded in obtaining permanent employment. That is to say that Tommy, whose every movement had been regulated for years with grandmotherly care, was suddenly thrown out into the

world with £21 in his pocket on the expiration of seven years' service, and expected to use it thriftily till he found a situation to suit him. Naturally the emancipated soldier, in nine cases out of ten, having never been educated in habits of self-restraint, but having been kept as sober as possible by act of parliament, "blued" the lot in one glorious and incandescent "burst" in the shortest time possible, and then starved till he either fell on his feet and got a job, or else fraudulently re-enlisted under an assumed name. In fact, many men who loved the army and could find no happiness in civil life, went to the reserve solely because they were haunted by the thought of the glorious spree they could have with the £21 awaiting them, and with the full intention of sneaking back to the service as soon as their money was spent. Thus criminals were manufactured, and though many officers of experience lost no time in representing the state of affairs to the authorities, it was many years before the latter could be induced to take action.

However, a couple of years ago the authorities had a lucid interval in which deferred pay, with all its evils, was tried and found guilty, and instead of deferred pay the soldier was given his messing allowance, and a gratuity on discharge of £1 for every year of service, with the proviso that no gratuity would be given to men enlisting for three years colour service only, unless willing to prolong their service, and that in no case would a larger gratuity than £12 be given.

It is almost too soon to say yet how this system is working. Of course it is only to be expected

that a large majority of men unaccustomed to exercise self-restraint, and suddenly freed from the supervision to which they have been for so long accustomed, will squander their money, as they did the deferred pay in former days, but if we can only introduce a more rational method of treating the soldier, and educate him to accept responsibility and to apply his reasoning powers to the management of his affairs, I see no reason why this bounty system should not be quite successful.

I think, however, that till this happy day arrives it would be better if, instead of paying the soldier this sum in a lump, we gave him his railway ticket to the place to which he wishes to go, and a series of orders which he could get cashed weekly at any post-office on production of his certificate of identity. £1 a week for twelve weeks, or for eight weeks as the case might be, would be of more assistance to the soldier seeking for work than the sum of £12 or £8 down. Of course an illicit trade in these orders might arise, but this might be met by a few prosecutions in which conviction should be followed by a sharp punishment. But whatever system we adopt we must do our best to make the soldier a useful member of society as well as a better soldier, by developing his intelligence, and by giving up the method of teaching him parrot-fashion, which has been handed down to us by our forefathers.

CHAPTER XIV

HAVING devoted by far the greater part of this little book to a description of the manner in which the private soldier is trained, fed, clothed, and educated, I must now endeavour to describe to you the manner in which his officers are prepared for the exercise of their difficult and dangerous duties in time of war, for it is obvious that all the training of an officer should be directed to preparing him to command troops on the field of battle.

Most of my readers will be aware that commissions in the army are obtained only, except in times of great pressure, by open competition, and that the candidate can either obtain the object of his ambition by competing for admission to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst or by entering himself for the examination at which subalterns of militia compete for direct commissions in the regular army. Commissions in the engineers and artillery are obtained by passing through the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. In either case he will have to state beforehand whether he aspires to a commission in the cavalry or in the infantry, or whether he is indifferent to which he may be appointed, and his decision on this matter will be final.

In making their choice the large majority of young men will be influenced chiefly, if not entirely, by the question of finance. As our army is now constituted no one can live in a cavalry regiment unless he is in possession of an income of at least £500 or £600 a year besides his pay, and even this income will be quite inadequate if the candidate aspires to serve Her Majesty in one of the crack regiments. Besides this, the question of outfit has to be considered. It is hardly possible to obtain an outfit for a cavalry regiment, including first and second chargers, for less than £500 or £600, which is a very conservative estimate of the probable expense.

Even in the infantry, a young officer will find it quite out of the question to support himself on his pay of some £95 a year, rising at the end of two or three years—when the rank of lieutenant is obtained—to £125, and even an infantry outfit can hardly be procured for less than £100, and more if the young officer be gazetted to a Highland regiment. I think it may safely be said that the average youngster in the average line regiment will just be able to keep out of debt on an allowance of £100 a year besides his pay; but it will be very much more comfortable for him if he is able to dispose of £150 or £200. Even with the larger sum he will find that there are no possibilities of extravagance, and he will not be able to indulge in hunting or polo, both of which are amusements which quickly run away with a good deal of money.

This question of officers' expenses is one which

must be tackled by the authorities without delay. It is not a question of any special legislation; all that is required is that the existing regulations should be strictly enforced, in the spirit as well as in the letter, and commanding officers who are found to encourage extravagance in their youngsters —and many do from some extraordinary idea that a certain amount of display reflects credit upon the battalion and all belonging to it—should be at once removed from the positions which they are so clearly unfitted to hold.

Though no special legislation is needed, then, to make the lot of the impecunious officer vastly more comfortable than it is at present, there can be no doubt that it will be advisable to introduce many radical reforms into the management of messes and the relations between the government and the officers of the army.

The most desirable step of all would be to place military officers upon the same footing as naval officers, and to allow them to draw rations, or "savings" — the money equivalent — in lieu, and to provide both officers' messes and private quarters with the furniture necessary to make them habitable. At present the only furniture in the mess and ante-rooms consists of a dining-table, a number of wooden-seated windsor chairs, a side-board, usually rather ricketty, iron fenders, fire-irons, and coal scuttles. In an officer's quarters the Government furniture consists of a small table, two windsor chairs, fire-irons, fender, and coal scuttle. The result of this is that officers are put to a heavy expense in the first instance in purchasing the

furniture for their mess, and secondly in moving it about, paying for depreciation and renewals. Similarly the individual officer has to completely furnish his quarters with furniture, carpets, and curtains, and then has to pay for the moving about of all his belongings whenever the battalion moves, the amount of baggage carried free being only, in the case of a subaltern, nine hundredweight.

The maintenance of the regimental band, including the purchase and repair of the instruments—expenses which are now borne by the officers of a corps—ought certainly to be paid by the public, which now only contributes £80 a year, the salary of the bandmaster. It is desirable, for military reasons, that regiments should have bands; it is just as fair for the Government to compel the officers to provide for their maintenance as it would be to make officers provide their men with rifles. I think that string bands, which are useless from a military point of view, and are very prolific of expense, should be strictly prohibited, but I certainly think that the whole of the expenses incurred in the maintenance of the regimental brass bands should, as a matter of course, be borne by the public.

An agitation has also been started lately with the object of inducing the Government to increase the pay of the officers of the army. There is a good deal to be said in favour of increasing the pay, but I am, personally, of opinion that, in the junior ranks, at any rate, more harm than good would be done by adding to the present pay of the subaltern and captain. It is eminently inadvisable to attract to the army men of an inferior social stamp to those

who now hold Her Majesty's commission; I am afraid that there would be a serious risk of doing this if the pay of the junior officer were increased sufficiently to make him self-supporting. On the other hand the necessity for giving all young officers an allowance from private sources to enable them to exist undoubtedly has a very bad effect in keeping out of the army the sons of many poor officers, whose whole natural bent is towards a military career, and who would, in nine cases out of ten, make most excellent officers.

There is one way, however, in which this difficulty could be surmounted. I would reserve a certain number of commissions every year for sons of officers in the army and navy, who would compete entirely among themselves, and the successful candidates should receive special commissions, carrying with them a higher rate of pay; in fact, I would introduce into the army a system somewhat resembling that by which poor students are enabled, by winning scholarships, to support themselves at the Universities.

But in the case of the senior officers, I think it is very desirable that the pay *should* be increased. There should be some tangible pecuniary advantage conveyed by field rank, which, under an intelligent system of inspection, instruction, and examination, ought only to be attained by officers likely to prove well fitted for any appointment. At present it is well known that numbers of men are annually promoted to field rank who are absolutely unfitted to command even a company. Many of these incompetents even obtain ultimately command of their battalions, though most of them are, I am glad to say, weeded out

before that by the examination which is known as that for the "tactical fitness of officers for command." Many men unfitted for command succeed in scraping through this examination, but the majority of incapables are bowled out by it. But it is a scandal that these men should ever have been given field rank; there ought to be no difficulty in "spotting" the incompetents before then, and as a matter of fact they *are* spotted before then, long before, but unless they give themselves away very flagrantly, they generally manage to get their majority as a matter of course.

But to return to my subject, the pay of field officers ought to be increased, if only for the reason that it ought to be possible for an officer who has served creditably for eighteen years and upwards to live in a suitable manner upon his pay. By this time the officer has usually married, and it detracts from the dignity of Her Majesty's service that officers and their wives should be unable to live in the same manner as civilians in the same position of society. At present it is quite impossible for a major in an infantry regiment to suitably support his wife and even a small family on 13s. 7d., or even on 16s. a day, which, with lodging allowance, fuel and light allowance, and forage allowance, will give him an income of less than £400 a year! It would be only fair, and I am convinced it would be a good thing for the army, and therefore for the nation, to increase the pay of a major to £1 a day, and to revise the scale of allowances so that the allowance will really represent the money equivalent of the article in lieu of which it is given.

The lodging allowance of a major is 3s. a day. Who can for a moment imagine that it is possible for any officer to obtain suitable lodgings for himself and his family in the neighbourhood of barracks, where, as I have already pointed out in the case of private soldiers, prices are artificially enhanced, for the sum of one guinea a week. Of course the official answer to this is that the allowance is not calculated for married officers, and that the marriage of officers is not officially recognised. If this is indeed the case, it is high time that this was altered.

It is absurd to assume that officers will not, in the majority of cases, be married by the time they have reached five-and-thirty or eight-and-thirty years of age. But the lodging allowance is not the only allowance which is ridiculously inadequate. The allowance given for fuel and light is fixed at 1s. daily for regimental majors in the winter months, reduced in the summer to 8d. It is not easy to see how a sum of 30s. a month is sufficient to pay for coal, for cooking, and all purposes during severe weather, as well as the cost of gas, oil, electric light, or candles. The forage allowance, which varies according to locality throughout the United Kingdom, but which may be taken as averaging 1s. 6d. a day, though I fear that this is rather high for an average, is also clearly inadequate. It is manifestly out of the question for any one keeping only one horse to keep him in hard condition all the year round for 45s. a month, especially when there are no facilities for buying forage in bulk, but when it is necessary to buy small quantities at a time.

A man keeping a number of horses, and able to take advantage of market fluctuations, and buy only when forage is cheap and then in large quantities, might manage well enough to keep his horses for a sum no greater than this apiece, but for the single horse-owner it is quite insufficient.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the horse is kept entirely for the Government service, and that the officer is compelled to keep a soldier groom, to whom he has to give at least 10s. a month besides plain clothes, for which he receives no allowance at all. Again, to continue the subject of the inadequacy of allowances, when an officer is employed on detached duties as, for instance, as an adjutant of volunteers or on the recruiting service, and it is consequently impossible for him to obtain the services of a soldier servant, he is able to draw an allowance of 1s. a day in lieu, though it is inconceivable that any one can imagine that a competent man-servant is to be obtained for anything like that sum. And it must be remembered that a man-servant is necessary, as no maid-servant could keep an officer's weapons, uniform, and equipment in order.

Again, officers on detached duties who are required to be mounted, but who cannot find accommodation in a Government stable, are paid 9d. a day, to cover the expense of hiring the necessary stabling accommodation. Here again the officer is unfairly treated, as it will be very rarely that anyone will be able to hire decent stabling and saddle room for 5s. a week.

My readers may also be surprised to learn that in cases where officers are so situated that it is impossible for them to avail themselves of the services of

military medical officers to attend themselves and their families, they can draw an allowance to cover the cost of civilian medical attendance, which consists of ½d. a day for each member of the officer's family and for one servant in addition. I fancy that it would not be easy to find a doctor who would undertake to attend a family of say three people for a payment of 2d. a day all the year round.

As regards also the issue of travelling allowances, both officers and men are badly treated; they have to complete their journey, in the first place, and cannot recover the money to which they are entitled till afterwards. In fact, many officers, especially those who from the nature of their duties have to do a great deal of travelling, are required to submit their claims every quarter, which means that they are for some time considerably out of pocket. The fairest method of dealing with this question would be to permit officers to draw in advance the amount which they estimated would be required, accounting for it afterwards.

I have, I am afraid, by this time somewhat wearied my readers by this long grumble at the manner in which officers are treated by the authorities in financial matters, but with one more complaint I shall close the list. My last complaint has to do with the subject of the provision of horses for mounted officers, especially for mounted officers in infantry battalions.

It is necessary for the proper performance of their duties that certain officers in an infantry battalion should be mounted, for instance, the adjutant, one major, and the commanding officer have to be

mounted on all parades. As these horses are required solely for the public service, I think it is only reasonable that they should be provided at the public expense. In batteries of field artillery all the officers are provided with their horses by the public, and I cannot see why the same treatment should not be extended to infantry officers. In the case of young subalterns offered the appointment of adjutant, especially, the present system works very unfairly. The young officer may find it hard enough to keep out of debt as it is; he knows perfectly well that his prospects in the service will be decidedly improved by his being appointed to the adjutancy of his regiment, but there is the question of fitting himself out with a horse, with an outfit of saddlery, cleaning kit, etc., and a mounted officer's uniform, including jack-boots and pantaloons, for which military tailors and bootmakers charge no trifling prices. It is true that on appointment his pay will be increased by 5s. a day, and that he will draw forage allowance, but he will have to pay and clothe a groom, to keep up his kit, and to make up the cost of feeding his horse over and above the forage allowance. Consequently it will be some time before he will be able from his pay to recoup himself for the outlay on his horse. Moreover, he has to run the risk of being "stuck" in his first deal in horseflesh, in which case he will have to start afresh and look out for another animal, so that it is easy to perceive the difficult situation in which a youngster may find himself placed by being offered an appointment, which he is practically

bound to accept if he has any wish to get on in his profession.

And in the case of older men promoted to field rank, men who have to buy a horse in consequence, but who may very possibly be decidedly hard up; here again circumstances of great hardship constantly arise. The worst of it is, in one way, that very often the public service suffers, as officers are compelled from motives of economy to purchase animals which are not really suited to the work for which they are required. For all these reasons it is eminently desirable that the Government should provide infantry officers, in the same manner as they provide field artillery officers, with horses from the remount department. A grant should also be given to provide the necessary saddlery. Concessions of this kind would not be asked for, if the officers of the army were paid on a generous scale, but when the miserably inadequate pay is considered, I think most people will agree that it is not fair that officers should be further taxed in order to provide themselves with articles of equipment which are required solely for the public service.

There is another serious item of expense which has lately made itself felt very severely; I refer to the question of messing on manœuvres. Of late officers have been put to a great deal of expense chiefly owing to the ridiculous attempt to live on manœuvres in the same style as they are accustomed to do at home. For this source of expense, as a matter of fact, officers have no one to blame but themselves, but the evil has grown of late, one corps not liking to be more "grabby" than its neighbours, with the result that the

cost of living has been excessively high, and that further expense has been caused by the damage to plate, glass, and furniture, owing to the manner in which they are knocked about in camp.

I hope that an order will be issued insisting on officers living on a service scale on manœuvres. Officers should be put on rations, as indeed they ought to be all the year round; only the service scale of baggage should be permitted to enter the camp, and, instead of manœuvres being a source of expense, there ought to be no difficulty in making them a time when it might be possible for an officer to economise. With this I shall bring to a conclusion my remarks on the financial treatment of officers by the Government, and shall now turn to the subject of his work, in and out of barracks, at home from one end of the year to the other.

CHAPTER XV

I AM afraid that there is a good deal of humbug about the British army—in fact, I believe that there is a good deal of humbug about all armies, but my experience leads me to believe that we are inclined to take soldiering even less seriously than any of our neighbours.

A good many years ago we suddenly became most desperately anxious for reform—splendid word "reform"—we abolished purchase, and, horrible to relate, we introduced the system of making officers actually pass examinations in military subjects for promotion, instead of purchasing their steps in the good old gentlemanly way.

We were frightened, to tell the truth, at the suddenness and ease with which the well-trained and highly-educated German army pulverised the easy-going, happy-go-lucky French army, which till then had been the model which we had slavishly followed. Consequently we suddenly became very German indeed; in some respects, indeed more German than the German. We even copied their collars, their helmets, their badges of rank, and their shoulder straps. We introduced, in fact, into our service, a superficial imitation of the salient points in their organisation, regardless

of the question of whether this gave us an army suited to our needs or not, and sat down satisfied with the monstrosity we had produced. In course of time the rough corners of this monstrosity became rubbed off by the friction due to constant use, and gradually we began to evolve from the ridiculous machine "made in Germany" an organisation which went a long way towards meeting the requirements of the Empire, and which would have gone a great deal further if the Empire had not acquired the inconvenient habit of expanding at a greater rate than the army could contrive to do.

Every year, in consequence, the army fell a little bit more behind in the race, and goodness knows where we would have ended, as our rulers were quite satisfied and always insisted that "next year" —which in politics corresponds to the Spaniard's "manana" — matters would re-adjust themselves, and the need for any increase in the army would cease to exist, if the sudden outbreak of a war in South Africa had not made it painfully clear to us that something, no one was prepared to say exactly what, but something, would have to be done to the army without loss of time.

Ever since the war began, very nearly, we have been quarrelling among ourselves as to what this "something" is, till at last we have reached the stage that it is highly probable that we shall end in doing nothing at all.

In this little book I am contributing my mite to the discussion, though I am here confining myself purely to details of training and equipment, and making no attempt to deal with the

larger question of organisation. As there is no test like the test of war by which the value of the training given in peace time to officers and men can be gauged, it is necessary, before discussing assumed errors in the military education of our troops, to examine the causes of the different reverses which we met with in the campaign, in order to see if they throw any light upon the subject.

I do not think it can seriously be disputed that our reverses were due primarily to the following causes. In the first place, certain general officers were found not to be the capable leaders which we had assumed them to be, judging by their performances in savage warfare and on the manœuvre ground at home. For this sort of thing it is not easy to find a remedy. War will inevitably prick the bubble of many reputations, and many men who show great military aptitude, and the capacity for controlling with skill considerable operations when little real responsibility attaches to them, as in time of peace, become unnerved, or confused, by the strain imposed upon them, in war.

We have also committed the mistake of assuming that an officer who has done good service as a subordinate will be equally efficient as a leader. This by no means follows, but it is not easy to say how the unfitness of an individual can be decided without affording him the opportunity of proving it. Any one wishing to make a selection of officers for high command will naturally be compelled to make his selection from among those who have already shown their capacity in subordinate positions. It is not till the rough test of actual command on service

has been applied that the paste can be distinguished from the real gem. But we can do a great deal to improve the training of our general officers, who have hitherto been for the most part denied all opportunities of learning the art of handling large forces except under conditions so absurd and unreal as to deprive them of all value.

For instance, though it has been recognised for many years that the introduction of smokeless powder and the enormously increased range of modern rifles would make it necessary for troops engaged in war to wear as inconspicuous a dress as possible, at all manœuvres our troops have paraded in masses, clothed in scarlet and gold, glittering like the cohorts of the Assyrian, and our artillery have been provided with black instead of smokeless powder, in order to "disclose their position." The very thing which on service one endeavours to keep concealed!

Moreover, though the supply of ammunition to troops engaged is recognised to be one of the most difficult problems connected with the use of magazine rifles, we prohibit our troops from making use of their magazines on manœuvres, and restrict their ammunition to some 15 or 20 rounds of blank per man.

Again, though one of the most difficult tasks which fall upon a staff in war is to arrange for the supply of troops in the field, and the arrangement of fresh camps or bivouacs, according to the results of each day's operations, we persistently either tie our troops to standing camps, where they can be supplied as easily as in their own

quarters, or we arrange beforehand the results of the operations, thus depriving them of all semblance of reality, and make previous arrangements for the site of each camp. I cannot but marvel at the extraordinary good fortune which has brought us through this campaign with such few breakdowns, when I consider the manner in which we have not only consistently denied our officer's opportunities for study, but have actually forced them to apply principles which we knew could not fail to prove unworkable under modern conditions of service.

But very many of our general officers have had but little practice in handling troops, even in comparatively small numbers, on manœuvres. How these officers have managed to escape disaster is inconceivable. Yet most of them have kept out of trouble, and have even succeeded in making themselves very dangerous antagonists to an enemy as crafty and *rusé* as it would be possible to find. Of course accidents did occur in the "blooding" of our generals and our troops, and the worst of it is that under an intelligent system of military education the majority of these accidents ought to have been preventible.

Many people persist in the contention that it is quite impossible to bring home to officer and man in time of peace the far-ranging quality and the deadly effects of the modern rifle bullet, and that it is equally impossible to discover, till the experiment is made in actual war, how very little effect artillery really has against troops well covered in properly constructed entrenchments.

In my humble opinion this is all nonsense. If

troops were annually exercised in field firing on a service scale, each man with 150 rounds of ball cartridge instead of with only 400 rounds in the whole battalion, an examination of the targets afterwards would give a very fair idea of the effects of their fire, and similar experiments should have shown us the powers and the limitations of artillery. I am quite aware that at Lydd, Oakhampton, and elsewhere, experiments have been carried out which have tended to show that artillery fire would be appallingly destructive against troops in shelter trenches, but in these cases the targets were usually arranged by artillery officers, jealous of the reputation of their arm, instead of being prepared by infantry officers, anxious to show that shells were not so formidable as the gunners insist.

Experiments such as I refer to, if conducted fairly, would have prevented heavy losses to us on very many occasions in this war. Lord Methuen would have been able to assume that our shrapnel fire had probably killed but few Boers at Graspan, instead of having to send the naval brigade to make that discovery for themselves at a terrible cost, and similarly he would not have expected the Sunday evening's bombardment to have in any way helped the attack of the Highlanders on Magersfontein the following morning.

General Buller also would hardly have expected so much from the prolonged bombardment of Colenso previous to his action on that ill-omened 15th December, and on many other occasions our generals would have been spared much anxiety

and our troops heavy losses if we had carried out careful experiments in peace, under common-sense conditions, to enable us to form a reliable idea of what guns and rifles could do and what could not be fairly expected of them. Now we have learnt, and I hope the lesson will not be forgotten, that a bombardment is useless unless continued till the assaulting infantry are within the shortest possible distance of the entrenchments which they are attacking. This lesson might, one would have imagined, have been learnt from the experiences of other armies in recent wars, but it is an old saying and a true one that the experience of others is usually disregarded.

Another cause which has led to many reverses in South Africa has been our persistent undervaluing of our enemy. For this serious military error I fear there is no cure but that of bitter experience. It is a failing which has always been peculiar to the British nation, and does not appear, in the end, to have seriously affected our position among the nations of the world. But still it is just as well to avoid it if possible, though it is even more necessary that we should not be led into the far worse error of going to the other extreme and taking *omne ignoto pro magnifico.*

One Briton may be equal to any two men of any other nation; this is an excellent maxim for the after-dinner orator, but is not to be commended as a sound basis on which to form military calculations which may have an important effect on the result of a campaign.

Then we have seen over and over again that our troops have got into a mess through carelessness and

ignorance of the art of reconnaissance. This is entirely due to bad training in time of peace, and indirectly due to our obstinately continuing to clothe our troops in red, to our retaining black powder for the use of our field guns on manœuvres, and to our giving our troops most of their training in country which is familiar in all its details to every officer and man. Moreover our soldiers, in the infantry especially, are not likely to take much interest in scouting if they are conscious that if they injure their clothing by creeping along the ground, by climbing trees, or by wading streams, they will have to make good the damage out of their own pockets. In this case the ground usually remains unsearched, the tree unclimbed, and the stream unwaded.

Cavalry scouting is made absurd and useless by the farcical unreality with which it is conducted on manœuvres. A general sends his cavalry to ascertain the movements of the enemy; a squadron rides off and detaches a fringe of small patrols, many consisting of but one or two troopers, who are supposed to watch the movements of the foe, if possible without being seen themselves. As a matter of fact these patrols usually ride boldly up to within a few hundred yards of his columns, which they leisurely scrutinise riding back to their own side when they have got the information they require, and getting great *kudos* for having obtained information in a manner which would be absolutely impracticable in war.

One factor which has hitherto militated considerably against successful scouting is that it takes time, and time is the last thing which we can spare on a field day, when we are all anxious to

get back to lunch. I suppose it would be a very radical measure, but I must confess that I would like to see the importance of reconnaissance impressed on all ranks, and a careful record kept for future reference, on every officer's record of service, of the occasions on which he permitted his command to be surprised on manœuvres. If this could be done it would make officers keen enough to study reconnaissance, keener than they are likely to be made by mere periodical exhortations that scouting must be attended to.

The war which is just over has also taught us that we have still in our service many officers who fail to realise the important effect which hunger and fatigue have upon the *morale* of troops. This is due chiefly to their training having been too theoretical, and to their having been for too long employed in staff offices where they have had few opportunities for keeping themselves in touch with regimental life. There is, of course, one remarkable instance in the war which will occur to every one, in which this cause can have had no effect, but it is, I think, generally recognised that the officer in question, though zealous, capable, and brave, is constitutionally unfitted for the command of troops in the field.

CHAPTER XVI

I HAVE already said that it is perfectly obvious that the training of our officers ought to be primarily conducted with a view to making them thoroughly efficient for war, but I fear that most of us have already recognised that of late years the whole system of military education in this country had tended to become daily less and less practical. The examinations which were instituted in order to periodically test the fitness of officers for the rank which they held and for promotion to a higher grade have gradually become more and more farcical, till at the present day, instead of being a test of the real knowledge of an officer, they merely test his capacity for rapidly accumulating a mass of undigested information, available only for a short period, by the aid of one of those military crammers who have sprung into existence in consequence of the rage for examinations which has lately become so marked a feature of our service.

Moreover, the examinations themselves are badly planned. No attention whatever is paid to the individuality of officers, but all are expected to conform to the same standard in every respect. Take, for instance, the promotion examination.

Every officer has to pass, at a time of his own selection, in the following subjects: military topography; military law; fortification; tactics; and organisation and equipment. Now, it is mere waste of time to endeavour to make accomplished military draughtsmen of the majority of officers. In most cases, it ought to be quite sufficient for an officer to be able to read a contoured map, draw a comparative scale, and find his way by the aid of the compass and by the stars. The latter is not taught at all in our service. It is absurd to expect every officer to produce a sketch map of a square mile of country, as is done nowadays.

If the authorities call for this sketch they will get it, but it has no military value whatever, and does not imply that the officer who executed it is competent to make a useful military sketch map of an unknown and unmapped country under service conditions. Those officers whose taste lies that way should be encouraged to take up topography, for which many have considerable natural facility, but it should cease to be a compulsory subject either at the promotion examinations or at the Staff College, where an enormous amount of time is wasted in endeavouring to make draughtsmen of officers who have not the slightest aptitude for work with the pencil.

With the examination in law I have no fault to find; every officer who has the command of men ought to be acquainted with the extent of his powers of punishment, and with the constitution and procedure of courts-martial, but I think that more stress ought to be laid on the papers answered with the aid

of the books, and less on the papers answered from memory. After all, the officer is always in reach of a copy of Queen's Regulations and the Army Act, and it is rather absurd to compel him to waste time in committing to memory details which in practice he would always obtain by a reference to the regulations.

The tactical examination is very sound ; as a rule, it is practical, and forms a fair test of the extent to which the officers under examination have mastered the leading principles of tactics. It is a pity, however, that strategy, that fascinating science, is entirely omitted from the curriculum of the regimental officer. I hope that ere long we shall see that every year the candidates for promotion will be asked a question or two on some great campaign, and will be required to explain their views on the strategy followed by the commanders. Military history, which in its minute details is almost too closely studied at the staff college, is entirely neglected by the bulk of officers of the army. It is impossible to find any good reason for permitting this sort of thing to go on. Every year it ought to be published in army orders that a certain campaign, or a certain phase of a campaign, would form the subject of examination at that year's promotion examinations.

The examination in fortification, especially since the practical out-door test was introduced, is also useful and well conducted, though here again there is a tendency to lose sight of general principles in the endeavour to make the candidates learn by rote the various formulæ governing the use of explosives and the construction of bridges. For information on these points the officer will usually be able to

refer to his pocket-book—by-the-bye there is a real need for a new pocket-book, which shall be really a *pocket*-book, for the use of officers on active service —and it is absurd to give him marks on the day of examination for his readiness to produce formulæ which will be gone from his memory, never to return, ten days afterwards.

As for the last subject, it is undoubtedly most desirable that officers should understand thoroughly the system on which the army is organised and the nature of the arms and equipment with which the troops are supplied, but in this subject also officers are bothered far too much with questions as to the exact number of riding horses in a division, and similar matters of detail, which they would in practice ascertain by a reference to regulations. It ought to be quite sufficient to expect officers to know exactly where they ought to look for information on these points; it is absurd to require them to bring it with them in their heads to the examination room.

But the examination system in our army is vitiated by the fact that officers are permitted to select for themselves the time at which they will be examined, and are consequently able to go to a good crammer beforehand and prepare for the ordeal, without any intention of keeping up their knowledge once the examiners have been satisfied.

The date on which officers are to be examined should be selected by the authorities, not by the officers themselves, and the notice given should be of the shortest, so that officers would be prevented from relying so much on the crammer, and would

be obliged to keep themselves always well up to date in their profession. I am convinced that the introduction of such a system, which I have no doubt would be most unpopular at first, would go a long way towards making the British officer an earnest student of the practical as well as the theoretical side of his profession.

Again, it is important that officers should be encouraged to attend the manœuvres of Continental powers. From every garrison an officer should be annually despatched to attend either the French, the Swiss, the German, or the Italian manœuvres. His expenses should be paid, and he should be required to read a paper to the other officers of the garrison on his return.

In this way a wide knowledge of the progress of the military art would gradually become diffused throughout the army, and, moreover, the study of modern languages would be greatly encouraged. The same officer should not be permitted to go on more than one occasion, except at his own expense, and naturally those officers only should be selected who were able to speak the language of the country to which they were to be sent. At the beginning of the year it should be notified in each garrison which manœuvres would be attended from that garrison, with a view to officers preparing themselves by previous study of the language if necessary. I have no doubt that there would be a very general anxiety on the part of officers to avail themselves of this opportunity of seeing foreign armies at work, and it would be necessary, probably, to have some sort of competitive examination in the language of

the country to which the officer was to be sent to determine the claim of rival candidates.

As for our own manœuvres, officers ought to be required to write brief reports on the operations which they had themselves witnessed, and should also be frequently exercised in drafting orders which would have been suitable to the manœuvres of the day. Hitherto we have not paid nearly enough attention to the very important subject of writing orders, owing to which neglect, on more than one occasion in the late war, things either miscarried or were within an ace of doing so.

To the civilian it may appear a simple matter enough to draft the orders which are to set in motion a body of troops of the three arms, in order to effect some prearranged object, but as a matter of fact all soldiers know, or ought to know, that such a task is most difficult, and the art of drafting clear, concise, and unmistakable orders is one which most men only acquire after long and laborious study, and a good deal of actual practice. Of late we have devoted more attention than formerly to this subject, but it is not even yet regarded as of really first-class importance. To the staff officer this art is absolutely essential; that the commander should be a master of it is also most desirable.

Leaving now this discussion of the general defects in our system of military education, and coming to details, we find that an enormous amount of time is wasted by our regimental officers, owing to the increasing extent to which the instruction of the troops is committed to specialists. The officer

lounges in the ante-room, while the recruits of his company are at musketry under the assistant-adjutant, while others of his men are attending a duty men's course of gymnastics, while others are learning signalling, others cold shoeing, others are on guard or coming off, and the scanty remainder are being drilled in close order and with the exactest attention to detail by the adjutant on the barrack square.

With our system of voluntary enlistment under which our recruits come in by driblets all the year round, it seems to be impossible to train the company systematically under its own officers, as is done in the German army, but with a little alteration of the present method of sending recruits from the depot, a nearer approach might be made to this ideal system than is the case at present. I must confess that I should like to see each captain superintend the musketry training of his own recruits; I am quite certain that, if he were given a comparatively free hand, and a considerably increased allowance of ammunition, excellent results would be obtained, and officers would take the greatest interest in the work.

The recruits having finished, the whole company should go to military training, which should last for two months at least, four companies being always struck off at the same time, and working in concert. With the military training musketry should be combined; in fact, a certain amount of musketry should be carried on all the year round, and not a week should be allowed to pass without the soldier firing his rifle with ball

ammunition. When these four companies had finished their course, the remainder of the battalion should commence in their turn, and when the whole battalion had been through field training, the commanding officer should commence battalion training. After a month of this, the battalion would be formed in brigade, and, at large stations, ultimately in division, the year's training winding up with the grand manœuvres in the autumn. But a programme of this nature would present endless difficulties, and would throw an enormous amount of work on officers and non-commissioned officers, unless, as I have already recommended, steps are taken to entrust the whole of the pay and clerical work of the battalion to a small clerical staff under a paymaster.

In the cavalry a similar system should be adopted, the keynote of the whole system being the devolution of command, in order to make the more junior officers accustomed to act for themselves, and ready to undertake responsibility on emergency.

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CHAPTER XVII

ULTIMATELY, however, the finish to the military education of the officer, whatever be his rank, must be given at the annual manœuvres, where the value of the instruction given during the preliminary work will be tested by officers of capacity and experience. But our manœuvres, as at present carried out, are little better than useless.

The schemes under which the operations are conducted are usually complicated by the introduction of imaginary forces, which only confuse without instructing the soldier, and they are executed under conditions which have no resemblance whatever to the conditions of actual warfare. Hence it is hardly too much to say that the large sums which have been spent on manœuvres in this country have been practically wasted, and have rather tended to make both officers and men regard manœuvres as an expensive and tedious farce than as an opportunity for rehearsing the tactics which they would have to put into operation against an enemy in case of actual warfare.

Once convince the officers and men of the British army that manœuvres represent war, with the bullets left out, and all will be found keen enough to profit by the instruction which they will receive.

What, then, should be done to make manœuvres really useful? In the first place the Manœuvre Act must be revised and greater powers given to the military authorities to obtain the ground required for the training of the troops. Care must of course be taken to postpone operations till the crops in the selected district have been gathered in; but once this has been done a deaf ear must be turned to the vigorous remonstrances of shooting tenants and game preserving landlords, who would rather see the army continue to be an expensive and comparatively useless toy than suffer the smallest inconvenience themselves in order to render it efficient.

As a matter of fact the game preserves would suffer very little from the movements of the troops, though it must be admitted that a lot of damage might be done by the crowds of curious spectators who would be attracted to the spot by the presence of so many soldiers. As these spectators would be a nuisance to the troops, as well as to the landowners and farmers, it would be necessary to provide powers by which the military would be authorised to close all roads and tracks in the district except to people provided with passes, which should be issued beforehand to residents in the district, to the accredited correspondents of certain important journals, to officers whose corps were not to be engaged, and to none others. By this means the obstruction caused by the assemblage of crowds would be prevented, the last justification for the selfish complaints of the game preserver would be removed, and the proper training of the troops would be facilitated. Power should also be given to the military authorities to close certain roads, any that they may

select, for brief periods even to the holders of passes. This last power need not be enforced unless occasion should arise.

All that would then be necessary would be to appoint an arbitration board, on which both the local authorities and the military should be represented, to assess and to pay for damage, and the preliminary arrangements would be complete. But the proclamation of the manœuvre area must be thorough. There must be no places "out of bounds"; within the wide limits of the ground selected the troops should be absolutely free to move anywhere. We want to render it impossible for a commander to take up a position in which one of his flanks is protected by an impassable turnip field and the other by an unfordable tennis lawn. This sounds absurd, but most of us have seen things even more absurd on manœuvres.

The framing of the general idea comes next. This is a matter of the utmost importance and ought to be entrusted to a committee of two or three officers, of experience in war, who have mastered the difficult art of preparing a scheme which shall make no call upon the imagination, and the execution of which cannot tempt the opposing forces out of bounds.

There should be no "special ideas"; once the opposing forces had been started off at opposite ends of the manœuvre area, at least fifty miles apart, the rival commanders should be given an absolutely free hand, subject of course to the decisions of umpires, and the events of each day should follow in their natural order the result

of the previous day's operations. Transport and ammunition should be provided on a service scale; all extras should be strictly prohibited, and tents, which can never again be allowed to accompany a field army in warlike operations in a temperate country, should not be used. That is to say, bell tents of the existing army pattern must be prohibited, for I have no doubt that it will be possible to devise means of sheltering the troops by the adoption of some of the small and easily portable tents of which so many patterns have lately been invented. Failing some shelter of this sort the troops will have to bivouac and to make the best of it, though as a rule it is no great hardship to sleep under the stars in England in the latter days of August or the first week in September.

When all these preliminaries have been settled, and the commanders of the opposing forces and their staffs appointed, it will be necessary to select the officers who are to serve on the umpire staff, and here the greatest discrimination must be shown in selecting officers who understand well the powers and limitations of modern weapons, who are able to come quickly to a just decision, and who are firm in insisting on instant obedience to their decisions.

The success or failure of manœuvres depends enormously upon the umpire staff. With good umpires a great deal can be learnt even under the most unfavourable circumstances; with careless, stupid, or weak umpires, very poor results will be obtained even from the most carefully planned operations. So much importance, in fact, should be attached to the formation of an efficient staff of umpires, that I think it

would be a good thing if the authorities took steps to have a number of selected officers specially trained for this very important duty.

These officers should constantly attend all foreign manœuvres, should make a special study of fire effect, attending with that object infantry field firing at our principal stations, the artillery courses at Oakhampton or Shoeburyness, and being present at all experimental firing in this country, and, when possible, on the Continent as well. The present haphazard system of appointing officers to act as umpires for the simple reason that they have applied for the job and are not required for anything else, is, of course, fatal to obtaining the best value from manœuvres.

It is quite clear that lessons of very great importance and value ought to be learnt from manœuvres carried out on the lines I have sketched out above. I imagine that many people will raise objections on the score of expense, and others will say that it is not fair to practically hand over so large a tract of country to the military for a fortnight or so at the pleasantest season of the year. To the former I would answer that any expense incurred in making our army a really efficient instrument of war will be repaid tenfold and twentyfold on the next occasion on which it is employed on active service, and to the second class of objectors it might be pointed out that the inhabitants of foreign countries put up with far greater inconveniences from patriotic motives, and that there is no good reason apparent why Englishmen should be more stupidly selfish than their Continental neighbours.

After all, it ought to be no great hardship for the inhabitants of any district to have it pro-

claimed under the Manœuvre Act for a fortnight, once in five or ten years. There might be certain inconveniences at the moment, but they would be of trifling importance compared with the great benefits which the country at large would reap from the possession of an efficient army, and those who suffered inconvenience would always be welcome to relieve their feelings by the exercise of the Englishman's privilege of grumbling.

I have alluded above to the selection of the officers to command the opposing forces and their staffs. This is a point of much importance, and it is time that we recognised the importance of training those who will have to command our armies on service in connection, as far as possible, with the troops which they will have to command and the staff officers on whose assistance they will have to rely. I am fully aware that certain difficulties will arise in carrying out this system, with the theoretical advantages of which all will agree, owing to the necessity for our continually sending troops abroad to relieve those due to come home from India and those colonial stations in which we have still to maintain garrisons. In consequence of this necessity it will in fact be impossible to carry out the system I propose in its entirety, but it might be carried out to a very considerable extent and could not fail to have the best results.

Hitherto we have taken but little trouble to give to those officers who would be employed on service plenty of practice in the handling of troops in time of peace. Take, for instance, the last Salisbury Plain manœuvres, and look through the names of the

officers commanding divisions and brigades on both sides. You will find the names of many who, as was well known at the War Office, had not the slightest chance of employment in case of war, and equally the names of many officers who would certainly be called upon to hold a command in war are conspicuous by their absence. Why, to take for example the two commanders of the opposing forces, it was well known that the Duke of Connaught would not be employed to command a large force in the field, not owing to any want of military capacity on his part, for we all know that His Royal Highness is a capable and zealous officer, but simply in consequence of his having had the misfortune, in a soldier, to be of royal blood. You will find the same thing if you examine the names of the officers employed on the staffs of the various divisions: these officers were selected for some doubtless good and sufficient reason, but that reason most certainly was not what it ought to have been, that in case of war they would be employed—unless the manœuvres proved their incapacity—in a position similar to that which they held for that short month on Salisbury Plain.

This sort of thing must not go on in future. I am glad to say that I believe that there is little likelihood that it will. The manœuvres will be utilised to test staff officers, under service conditions, and those found wanting must be discarded once and for all. The staff exists for the benefit of the army, not the army for the aggrandisement of the staff, as some staff officers appear to have thought up to the present.

And this naturally brings me to a discussion of

that much-abused institution the Staff College, from whose graduates so much has been expected, and which has on the whole so signally failed to justify its existence during the long war which has just drawn to a close.

Why has the Staff College not been a success? Why have the officers with *p.s.c.* after their names not monopolised the honours of the campaign? Neither question is easily answered, but I will do my best to point out in what, I conceive, lies the chief defect in the Staff College system.

In the first place, the Staff College has beyond a doubt failed to attract to it the best among the regimental officers of the army. Very many of them have been frightened away by the amount of book work, especially in the study of mathematics, necessary in order to have a chance of being among the successful competitors at the entrance examination; others have not been able to afford the expense, for crammers are costly luxuries; and others have been prejudiced against the whole Staff College system and its results by unfavourable specimens of staff officers whom they have met.

As to the first reason, I am very strongly of opinion that in many respects the entrance examination might be greatly altered for the better. In the first place it is far too theoretical, and secondly there are many subjects, algebra and trigonometry for instance, which are of little or no practical use to the staff officer—except the topographical specialist—in the field. Then again, the system of open competition, with its attendant evils of crammers and heavy expense, is very much

against the value of the College. And, as in the promotion examinations, the exaggerated importance attached to military topography frightens away many men who might make the very best staff officers.

When the candidate has succeeded in satisfying the examiners and joins the College, no attempt is made to develop his abilities in the direction of their natural bent, but every man has to go through practically the same mill. Not nearly enough attention is paid to the special gifts or temperaments of individuals; an endeavour is made to turn all out according to one sealed pattern, all good-all-round staff officers, with the result, which might be expected, that a few good-all-round men are turned out, but that the majority are, as a matter of fact, bad-all-round.

Students certainly learn a great deal at the College, which ought to be of great use to them, but no attempt is made to keep up their knowledge, and the staff work at home, on which such of them as succeed in getting appointments are employed, is the most dull and uninteresting routine it is possible to conceive.

Officers spend two short years at the Staff College; during this time they are industriously crammed with a mass of miscellaneous information, most of which is but ill-digested, but can usually be reproduced with sufficient exactness at the final examination; then, after a brief period, during which they are attached to other arms of the service than their own, they go back to their regiments, to keep an eye on the *Gazette*, and to intrigue for an appointment. If they have interest behind them, and sufficient *savoir faire* to "run" an office without interfering too much with the clerks, and

sufficient tact to keep on good terms with their superiors, there is no reason why the lucky staff officer should not go, without a break, from one comfortable appointment to another, in defiance of the wise regulation that officers should put in at least two years' regimental service on vacating an appointment on the staff.

No wonder that men without friends at court grudge the expense of preparing themselves for the entrance examination to the Staff College. But the soldier with interest is a fool if he does not have a "shy" at the exam.; once he can put *p.s.c.* after his name he is provided for for life, unless more than usually incompetent.

Regimental commanding officers are themselves very much to blame for permitting many men who are quite unfitted for staff duties to enter themselves for the examination. No officer is permitted to attend the examination who is not recommended by his commanding officer as likely to make an efficient staff officer. Yet numbers of men go up every year who are notoriously unfitted by defects of temper, or by other causes, for staff employment. These men get into the College, are as a rule promptly "spotted" there, but are never returned to their regiments, nor have I ever heard of a commanding officer getting wigged for sending obviously unfit men to Camberley.

Some years ago, two students were sent back to their regiments at the end of their first year, being, in the opinion of the teaching staff, unfitted for staff employment, and immediately there was a tremendous hillabulloo in the army. The Staff College was bitterly attacked in the press: questions were asked

in the House; and such a storm was raised that the authorities of the College have been apparently afraid to repeat the experiment, for it is impossible to believe that they have had no incompetents to deal with since.

I have heard the Staff College termed a "bye-word and reproach in the army"; I dislike using unnecessarily strong language, but I must confess that in every mess in which I have ever been, everywhere where regimental officers of the army gather together, I have continually heard the Staff College and all connected with it abused in no measured terms.

The army ought to have confidence in its staff; I hardly think that it can be seriously argued that it has anything of the kind. This sort of thing must be prejudicial to good results on active service; it has most certainly been prejudicial during the recent war. The authorities must endeavour to get to the bottom of the cause of this feeling, and must make an honest attempt to remove that cause if they wish to really improve the efficiency of the army as a whole. The importance of having a good staff cannot be overlooked; the importance of giving a highly specialised training to the staff officer may easily be exaggerated; that this has been the case with us may fairly be inferred from the fact which will not, I think, be disputed, that in the last war the average regimental officer, temporarily entrusted with staff duties, did just as efficient work as the average Staff College graduate.

Before bringing this little book to a conclusion, there are one or two subjects connected with army reform on which I would like to say a few words.

Of late all sorts of suggestions have been made with a view to improving the quality of the regimental officers of the army, who, in common with their comrades on the staff, have been recklessly accused of possessing every military failing but that of want of courage.

Most of us have taken these accusations at their proper value, recognising that, if the British officer has failed to prove himself at once thoroughly equal to the novel conditions of a campaign, differing in every respect from any war since the introduction of firearms, it has been due, not so much to any want of capacity on his part, or to any dislike to the profession of his choice, but to the out-of-date system on which he has hitherto been educated.

The British officer has been accused of idling away his days, and devoting himself purely to sport, and to sport to the exclusion of everything else. In this charge there is a good deal of exaggeration. The British officer is devoted to sport, and thinks a great deal more of sport than he does of manœuvres for instance, but this is simply because he has had sufficient sense to see the farcical nature of our manœuvres, and has satisfied himself that the theorists who have taken his military education in hand don't understand the subject which they profess to teach. So, with a shrug of his shoulders, he has found consolation in sport, and is in that respect much better employed than the bulk of his café-hunting *confrères* on the Continent.

But that he is idle, even as regards what passes as his military duties, is not the case. His occupations are numerous and exceedingly various. At one moment he is counting the money and measuring

the beer in the canteen; at another he is taking stock in the grocery bar; at another he is conducting the auction of the effects of a deceased soldier; at another he is investigating the quality of flannel shirts, boots, braces, and clothing of every description in the quartermaster's stores; and at another he is taking down the evidence against a prisoner who is to be tried by court-martial.

Few of these duties may have anything to do with the more strictly military duties of his profession, but they all come to his lot, and he carries them all out to the best of his ability. Owing, moreover, to the weak points of our present system, by which those companies not at musketry or field training are reduced to mere skeletons by the numerous guards, fatigues, and men for garrison and regimental employ which they have to find, for many weeks, if not months, in the year, he has no really military work to do whatever, beyond taking his turn at orderly duties, and in sitting on courts-martial and boards. Consequently he has a lot of idle time on his hands through no fault of his own, and is kept kicking his heels morning after morning in the ante-room or the orderly-room, when he would be much better employed following the hounds or playing cricket or rackets.

But if the military authorities could only be induced to adopt a system of military training similar to that sketched out in this book, including the reduction to a minimum, if not the total abolition, of guards and the employment of reserve men to perform the duties which come under the head of garrison and regimental employ, it would then be possible for officers to be continually actively em-

ployed in military work during the whole time which they spent with their regiments. But with this increased activity while with their corps would come an increased appreciation of leave of absence, and I earnestly hope that no desire to curry favour with the populace by forcing officers to work harder, will lead the military authorities to cut short the present allowance of leave.

During the winter months, when the men will be on furlough in considerable numbers, and when little useful military work can be done, it ought to be quite sufficient if half the officers of every corps are present at one time. During the military training and manœuvre season leave should only be given very sparingly and in cases of special urgency; at other times officers ought to be liberally treated.

I have also seen it suggested that officers should be required to wear uniform everywhere when not on duty. There may be some hidden virtue in a uniform which I have not been able to discover, but I must confess that, unless it has been found that the patient can extract the military virtues from a red coat by wearing it, I cannot see how the mere fact of being compelled to wear uniform at all times will make the British officer a better soldier or more valuable to his country. Such an order would do no real good; it would be most unpopular; it would be evaded in every possible manner, and could not fail to lead to all sorts of undesirable scandals if any attempt were made to strictly enforce it.

But while on the subject of uniform, I hope that we may look for some useful and sensible reforms in this direction. At present the officer is overburdened

with uniform. What with scarlet serges, blue serges, patrol jackets, frock coats, and tunics, not to mention mess jackets and khaki, an officer has more uniform than he knows what to do with.

All that he requires is one dress for show parades, one working dress, in which he will do the whole of his ordinary work, including manœuvres, and a dinner dress, for which last purpose I do not see how we are to improve upon the present mess uniform. The "swagger" dress for officers can quite well remain the same as the present full dress, though I think the dress of the men might easily be made a little more attractive, and the working dress should be loose and easy fitting, with a roll collar, something on the lines of a Norfolk jacket, and of a material selected for its hard wearing qualities, and in cut and colour precisely the same as the working dress of the men.

Add to this a greatcoat for home service, and the kit of the officer ought to be complete, and should be both serviceable and economical. Our army has suffered severely in the past, more especially during the last five years, at the hands of the army tailor; for heaven's sake, let us have a little peace. Let us be done with these constant and irritating changes in pattern, in buttons, in lace. Let us try and treat the dress of our soldiers on a commonsense basis, and let us get rid of the notion that a soldier must be a person hermetically sealed in a uniform devised with the sole idea of filling the pockets of the tailors and causing discomfort to the wearer.

Of course I am fully aware that the army is itself by no means innocent in this matter. There is a certain class of soldier, at least he belongs to the

army and calls himself a soldier, who attaches more importance to clothing and details of uniform than to any other matter connected with military affairs. Gentlemen of this kidney attach the most exaggerated importance to matters of dress, and take a delight in inventing new and ridiculous articles of uniform which they frequently have influence enough to have foisted upon the army. These gentlemen have a partiality for inventing head-dresses, though between them they have not yet discovered one serviceable or even becoming military cap, and had a splendid time lately in devising fancy mess jackets for the officers of infantry battalions. I hope that it will be found possible to prevent them from putting in their oar now that the uniform of the whole army is apparently to be remodelled. Why must the soldier be the only working man in the Empire whose dress is entirely unsuited to the work which he is called upon to perform?

I must now bring this little volume to a conclusion, and hope that it may succeed in giving to my civilian readers some information about the army, which has had for so long to contend with so much unwise treatment, but which only requires to be trained on principles founded on the most ordinary common sense to become the most formidable instrument for war which the world has ever seen.

THE END.

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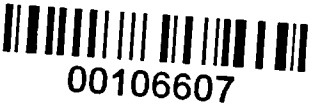

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